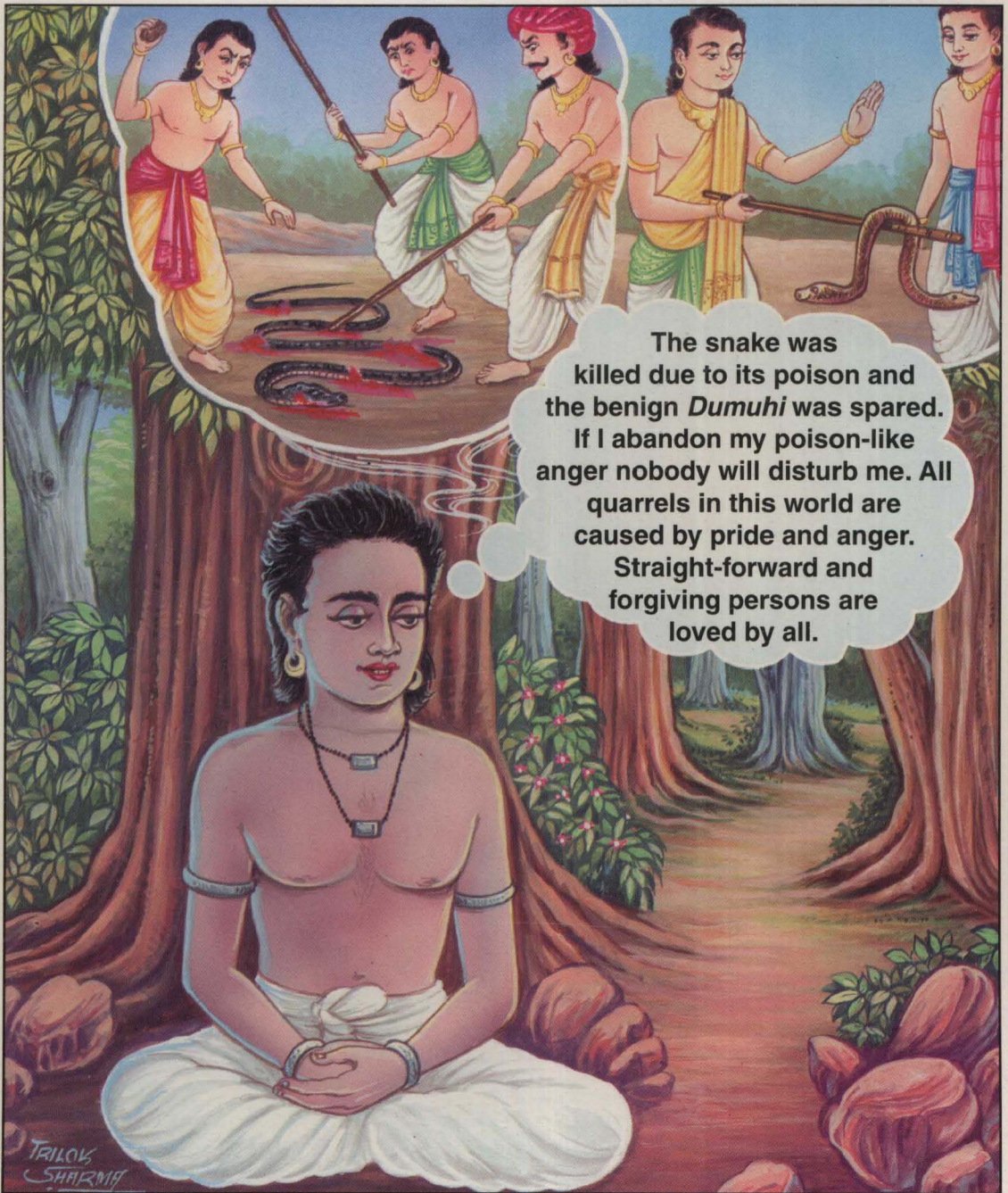




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HARIKESH BAL



The snake was killed due to its poison and the benign *Dumuhi* was spared. If I abandon my poison-like anger nobody will disturb me. All quarrels in this world are caused by pride and anger. Straight-forward and forgiving persons are loved by all.

Harikesh Bal

This story is more than two thousand five hundred years old but even today it serves as a guiding factor for social and political environment. Harikesh Bal was born in a poor and so called untouchable family. His dark complexion and fearful and bizarre appearance made him repulsive even to people of his own caste and clan. Over and above this, his angry and jealous temperament added fuel to the fire of his sorrow.

With the blessings of a guru Harikesh Bal, the object of everyone's hatred, finds the path of austerities. He conquers his anger. Conquering his faults, he one day becomes an austere shraman (ascetic) venerated by gods. People infested with their caste-prejudice slight and insult Muni (ascetic) Harikesh Bal. The forgiving Muni influences these people with his tolerance, knowledge, and power of austerities, and shows them the true path. Removing casteism, he furls the flag of the victory of austerities, renunciation, and self-discipline at a prominent center of religion like Varanasi.

This story, presented in interesting style, is based on the Jain scripture Uttaradhyayan Sutra and its commentary. The importance of Jain principle of the good deeds and not of caste has immensely helped towards welfare of humanity.

The story has been written by the famous restorer of pilgrimage centers Kalyanak Tirthoddharak Acharya Shrimad Vijaya Nityanand Surishvar ji-M. We are indebted to him for this favour. Many of the picture stories of this series have reached our readers through his inspiration only.

—*Shrichand Surana 'Saras'*

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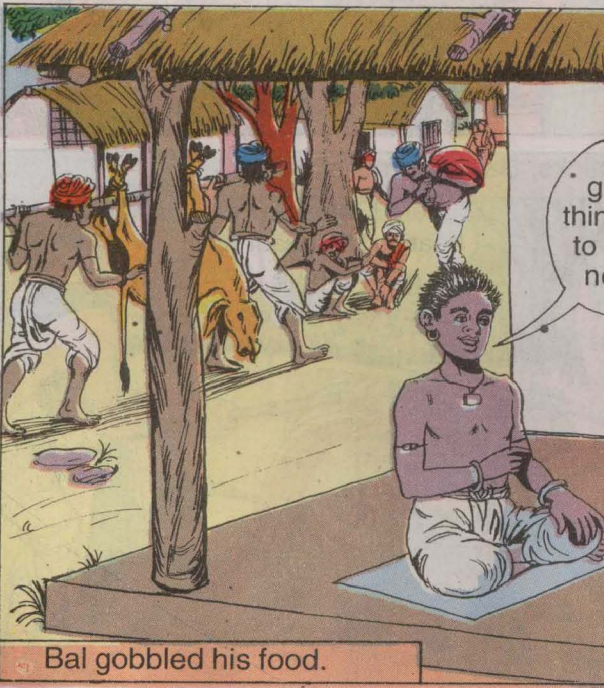
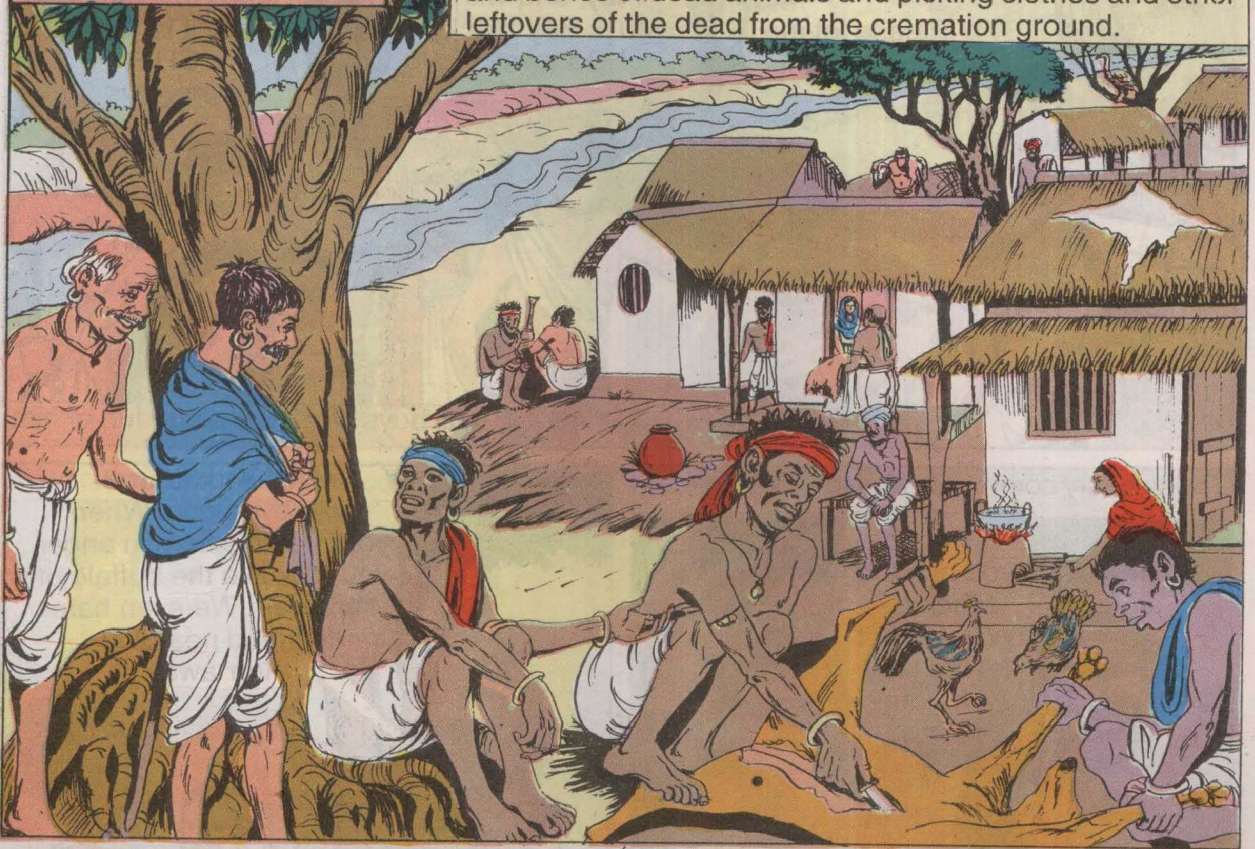
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HARIKESH BAL

On the dry sandy banks of the Ganges was a filthy settlement of poor people. Their livelihood was selling hides and bones of dead animals and picking clothes and other leftovers of the dead from the cremation ground.



In this settlement lived a man named Balkott. Gauri was the name of his wife. The name of their son was Bal. He was very crooked, ugly and black.

Ma ! Quickly
give me some-
thing to eat. I have
to go to play with
neighbourhood
boys.

Son ! Wait,
I will just
serve.

Bal gobbled his food.

In the nearby ground the neighbourhood boys were playing. Bal came to them and said—

Please let me play with you.

Play, and with you ? Hey blacky ! Go away !

Go and see your face in the Ganges first. How dirty and ugly it is. CHIH ! CHIH !

All boys started making fun of him.

These nasty comments from the boys made Bal cry

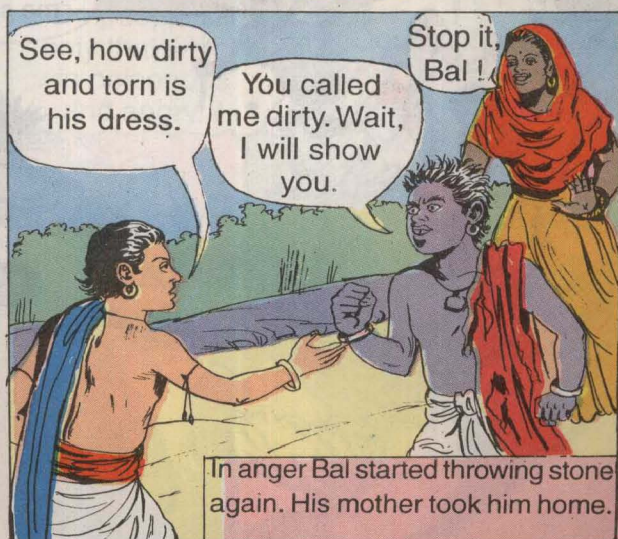
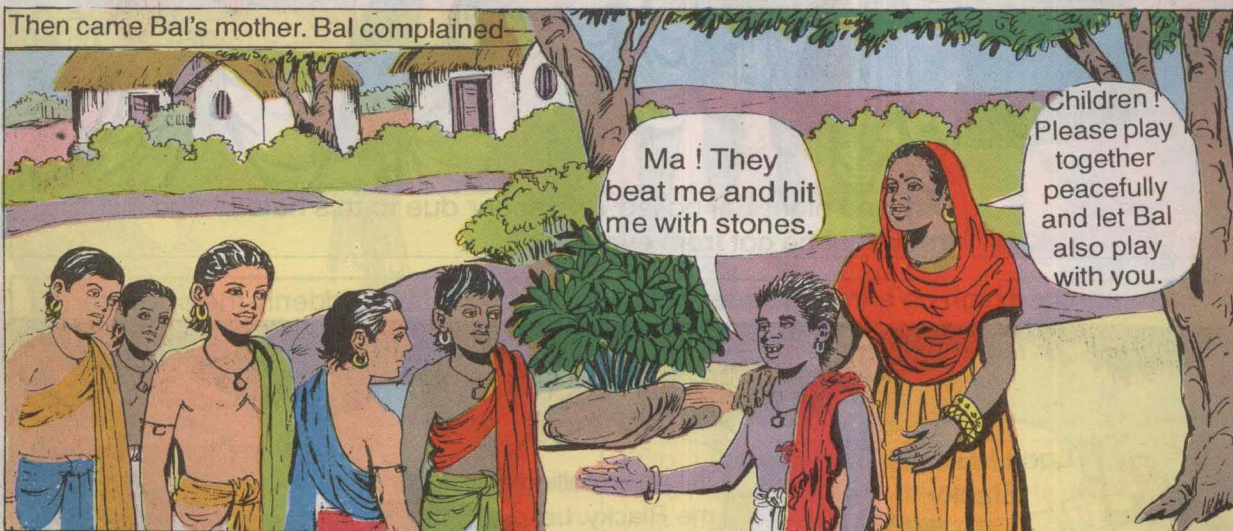
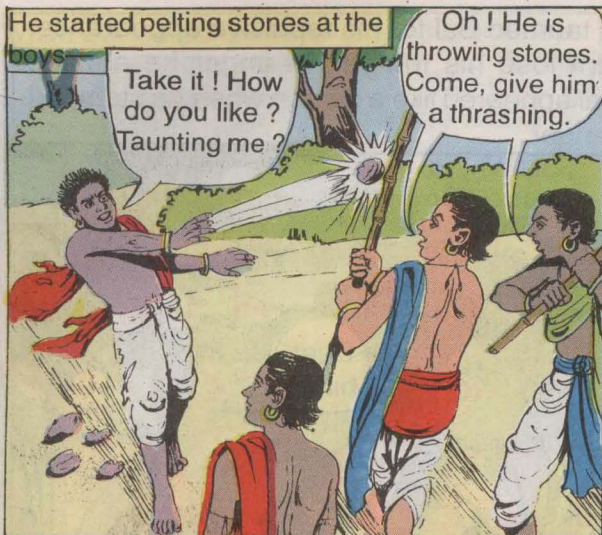
Why do you call me Blacky ? Will you not let me play with you ?

No ! You quarrel with everyone. When your nostrils flare in anger you look like the buffalo of Yamaraj#. We even hate to stand near you. Run away.

Some naughty boys started hitting Bal with sticks. Bal was mulish; he endured the beating

I will not move from here. I will pelt stones at you and make you run away

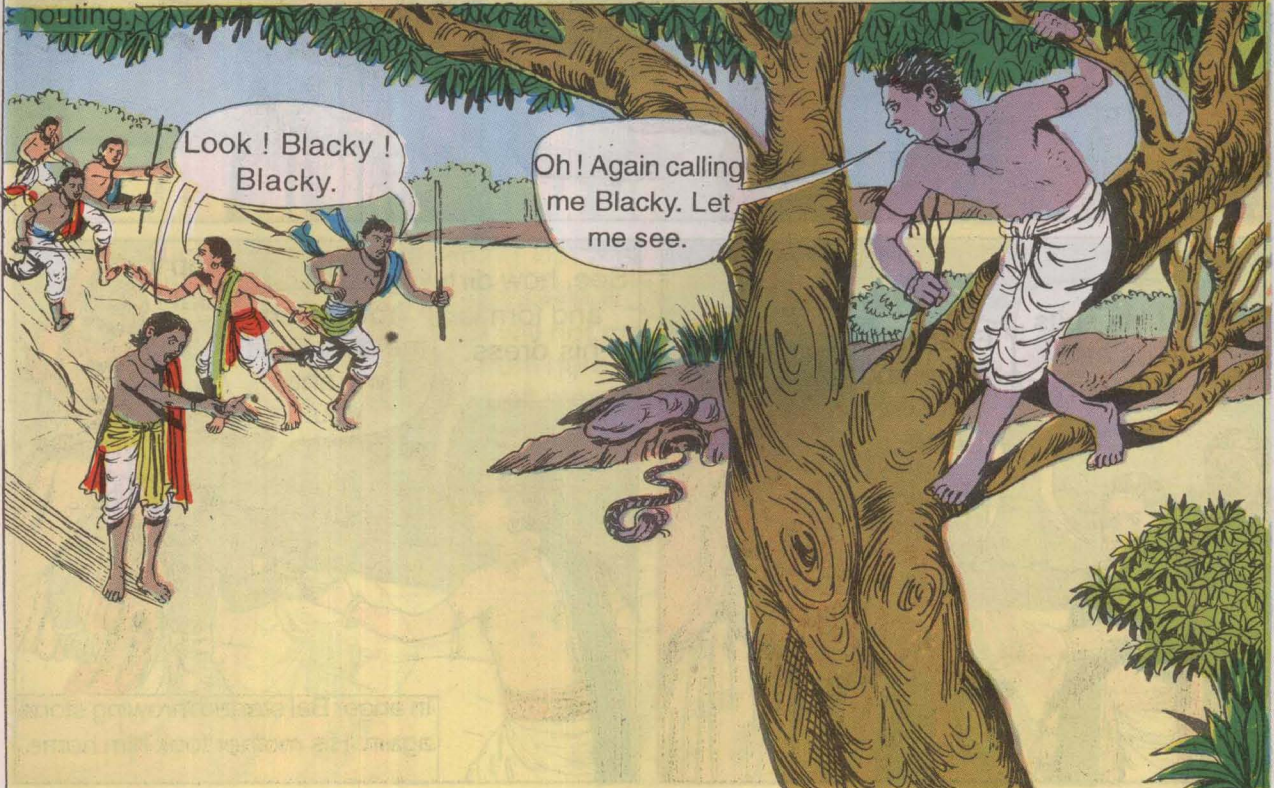
Here ! Take the beating ! Still want to play with us !



Every one in the slum, young or old, hated and taunted Bal for his repulsive appearance. This hateful and insulting treatment made him lose his temper. In anger he abused everyone and pelted stones. Already repulsive Bal appeared like a demon when he stomped and waved his hands with eyes burning red in anger.



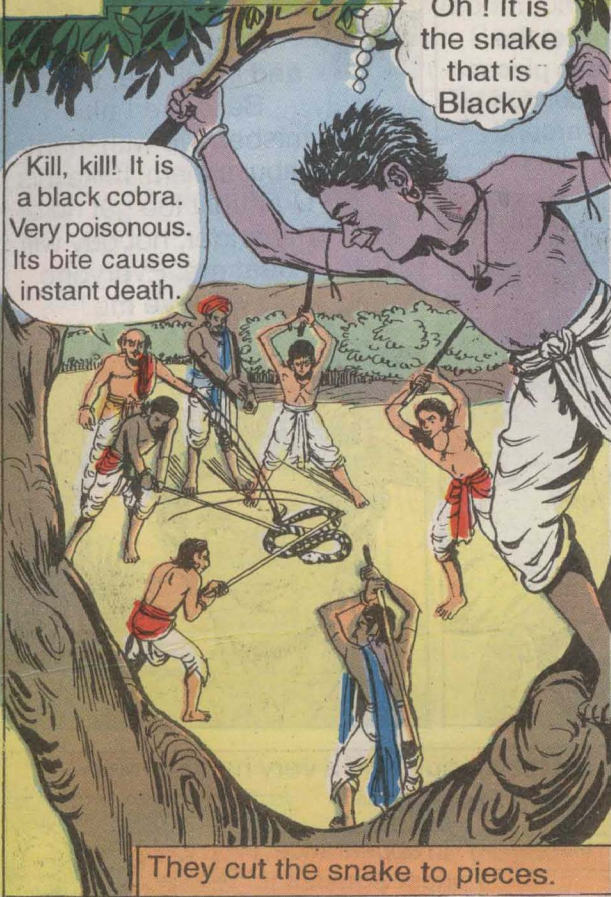
One day, perched high on a tree, he was watching the boys play. Suddenly the boys started shouting.



When Bal looked down he found that the boys were hitting a snake with sticks.

Oh ! It is the snake that is Blacky.

Kill, kill! It is a black cobra. Very poisonous. Its bite causes instant death.

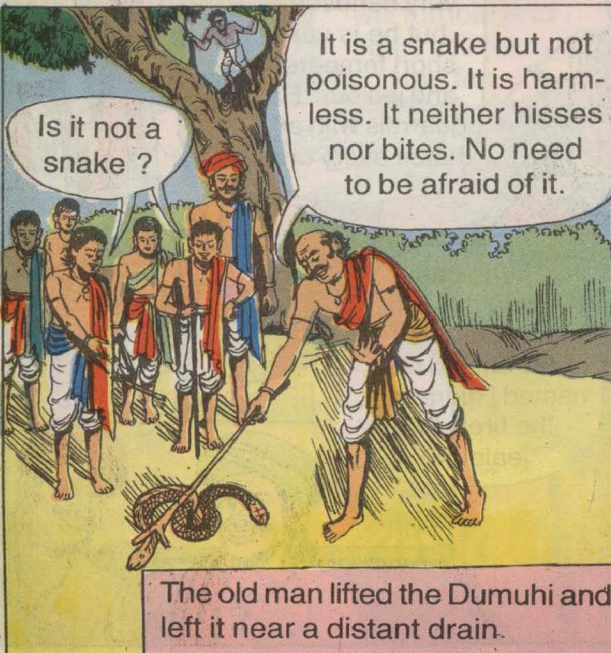
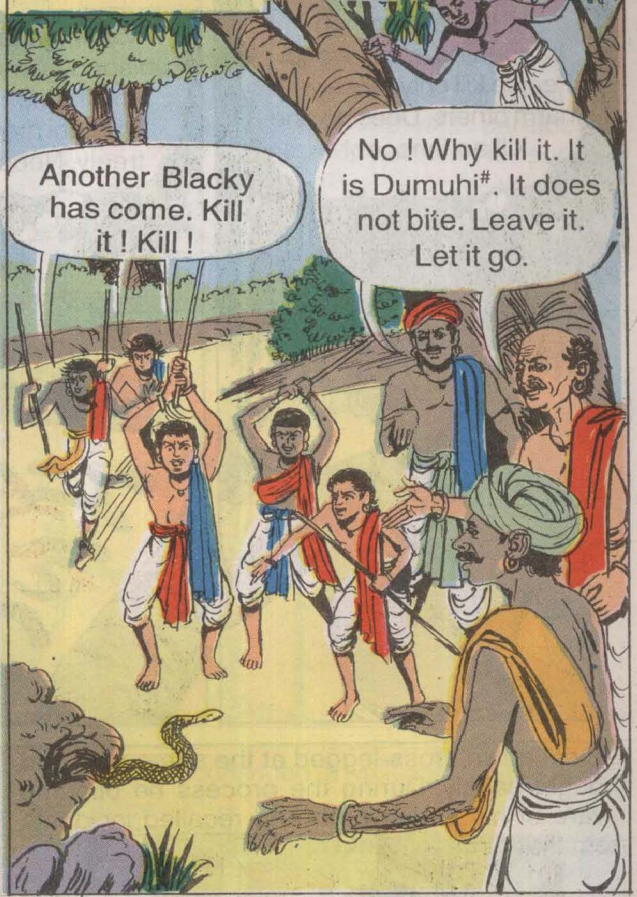


They cut the snake to pieces.

A little later a thick snake came out of another hole. The boys again shouted—

Another Blacky has come. Kill it ! Kill !

No ! Why kill it. It is Dumuhi#. It does not bite. Leave it. Let it go.

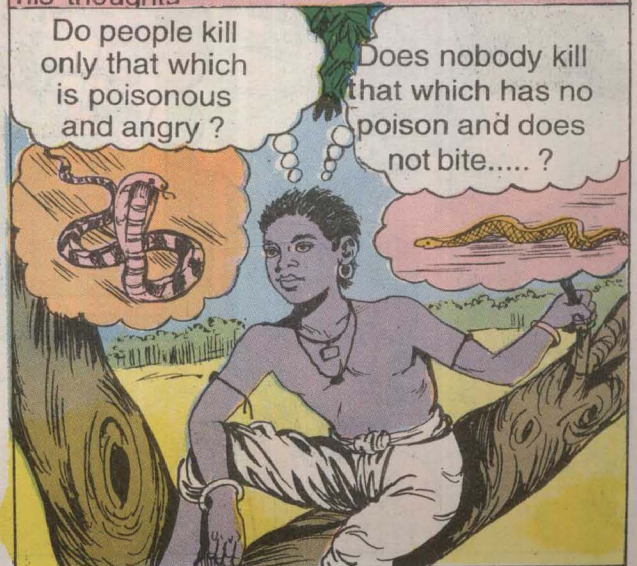


The old man lifted the Dumuhi and left it near a distant drain.

From the tree, Bal was watching all this. His fists, tight in anger, relaxed. He was lost in his thoughts—

Do people kill only that which is poisonous and angry ?

Does nobody kill that which has no poison and does not bite..... ?



He gave a serious thought to this incident—

Is this a common happening in this world. People kill only those who harm others. Does no one kill an innocent.?

He looks at the pieces of the dead snake—

My neighbours cut the poisonous snake to pieces and the non-poisonous Dumuhi moves around freely. Nobody killed it.

With these thoughts Bal got down from the tree—

People beat me and insult me, why ? Because I also misbehave with them. I abuse them. If like this Dumuhi I too get rid of my anger, nobody will beat me. Everyone will love me.

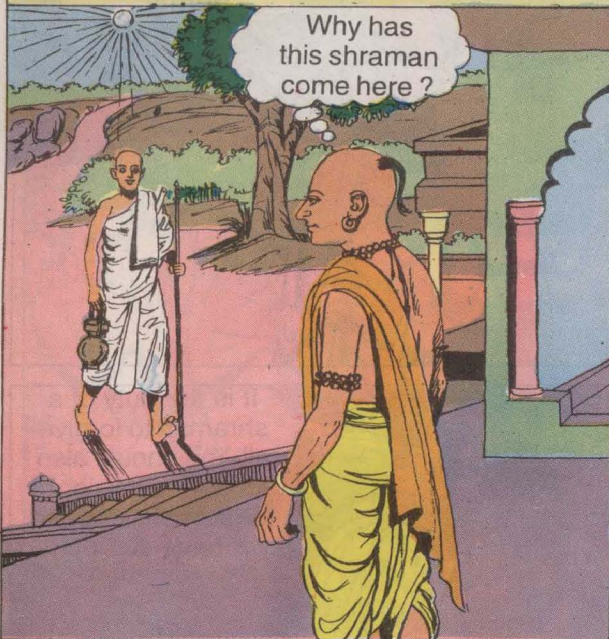
Bal sat down cross-legged at the same spot and thought calmly. During the process he became aware of his earlier birth and recalled incidents from that birth—

In Hastinapur lived a very handsome priest called Sombhatt—

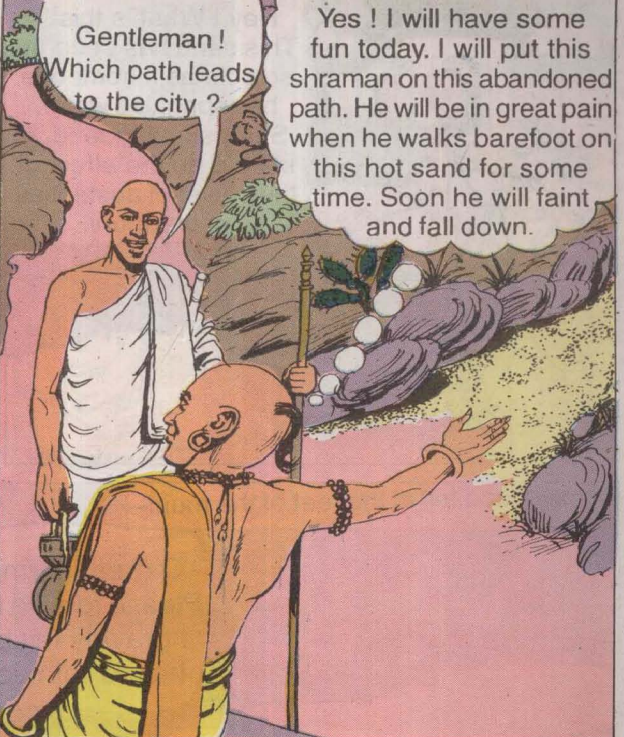
In appearance priest Sombhatt is very handsome but he is very short tempered and jealous. He quarrels with and hates every one.

Who has given him the name Sombhatt ? He should be named Rudradhatt, the fireball of jealousy.

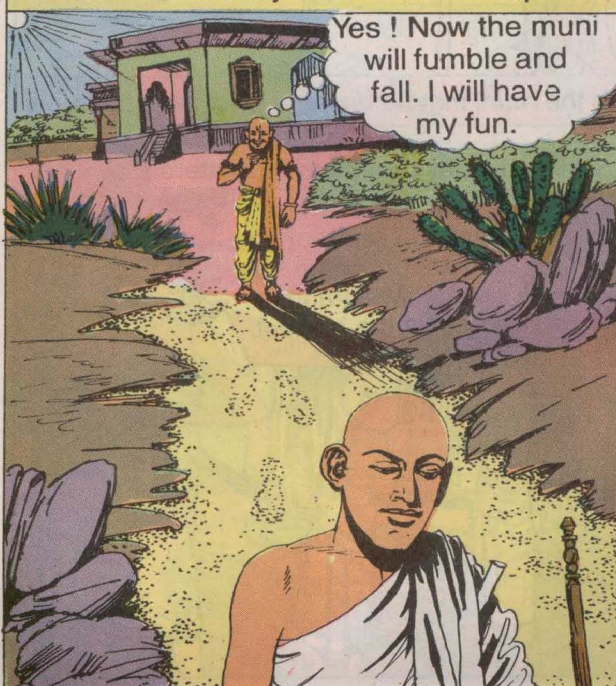
Once a muni[#] came to Hastinapur. It was a summer afternoon with scorching sun. While looking for alms for breaking his month long fast he came to Somdatt's house. Seeing a shraman Somdatt was afire with envy—



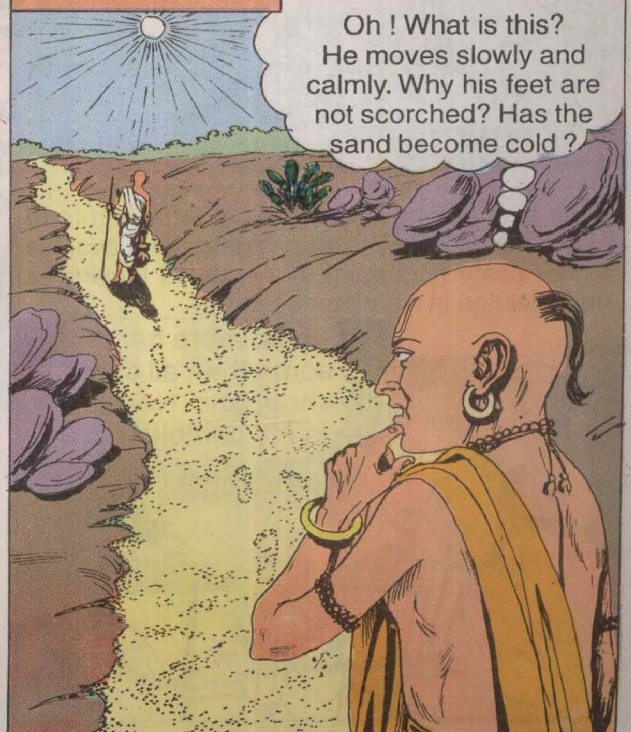
Finding Somdatt standing at the gate the shraman asked—



Somdatt sent the muni on the sandy path. The simple ascetic took that path. This path was known as Hutavaha (path of fire). Somdatt watched with curiosity from the end of the path—

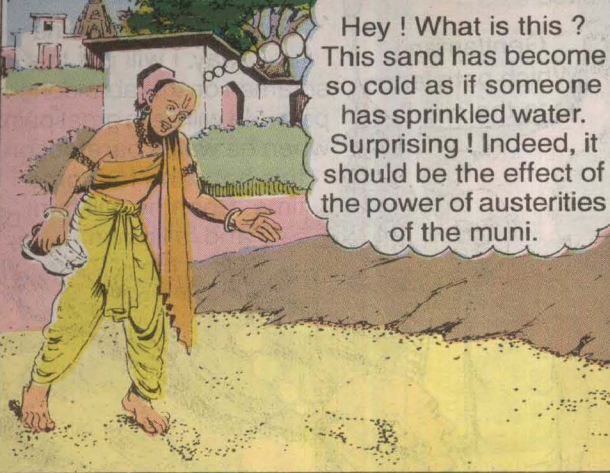


But the ascetic continued to walk normally. Somdatt was astonished—

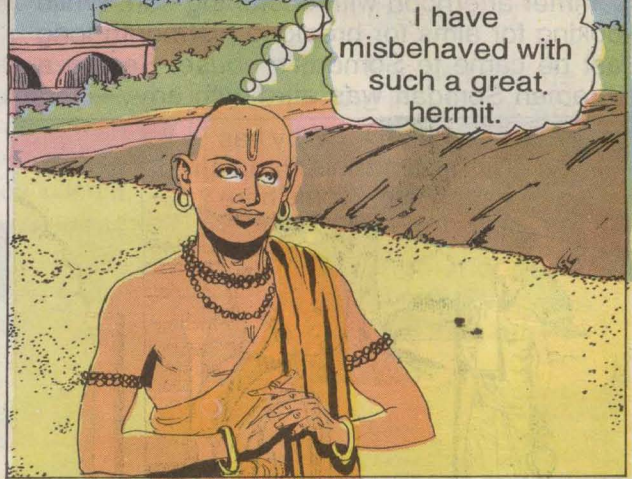


This muni or Jain ascetic was king Shankh of Mathura. He had renounced his kingdom and started rigorous austerities after getting initiated. He was an accomplished and serene sage.

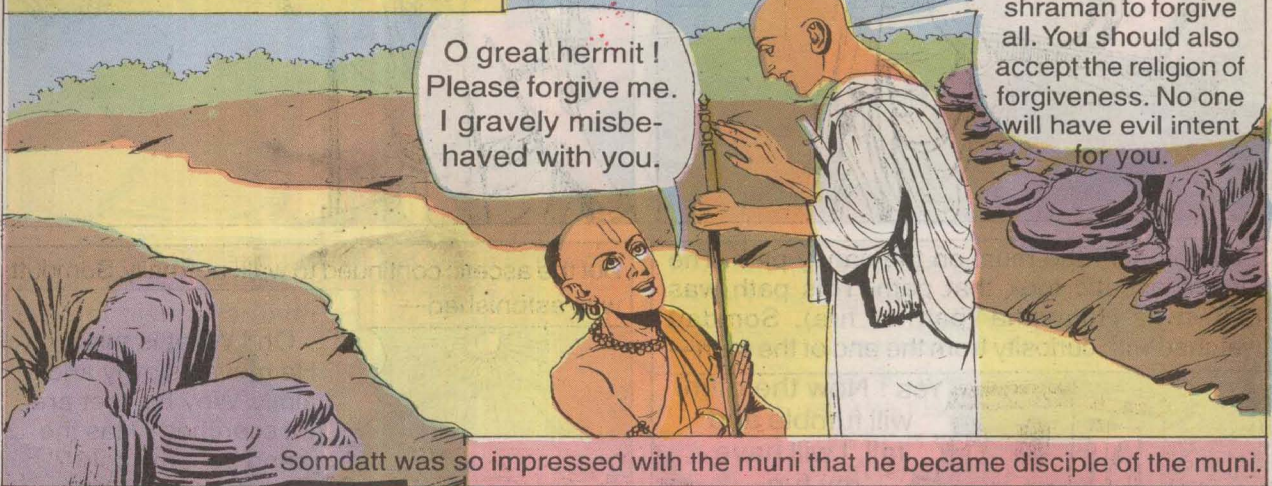
Somdatt took off his shoes and walked on the path



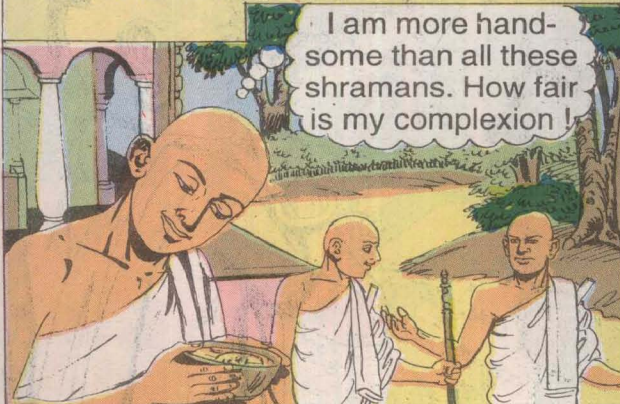
Somdatt was filled with remorse at his own ill intent



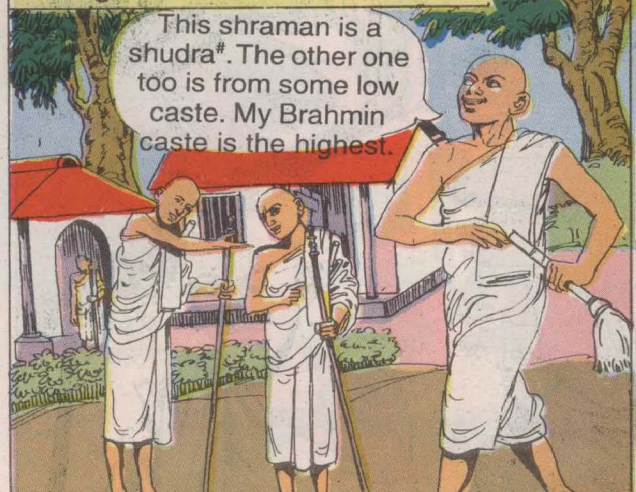
He went and fell at the feet of the muni—



Even after getting initiated, Somdatt was proud of two things. One, his appearance and two, his higher caste (Brahmin). He enjoyed looking at his reflection in his water bowl—



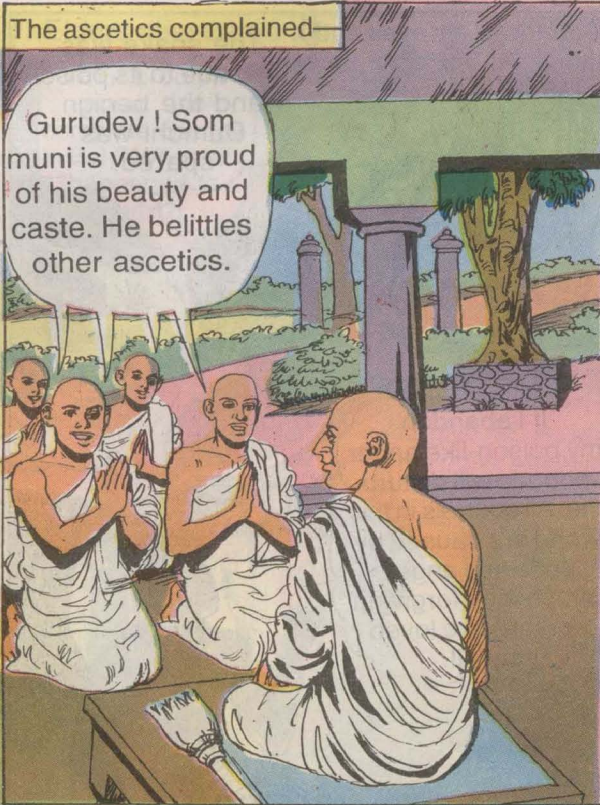
Looking at other shramans he muttered



Lower caste.

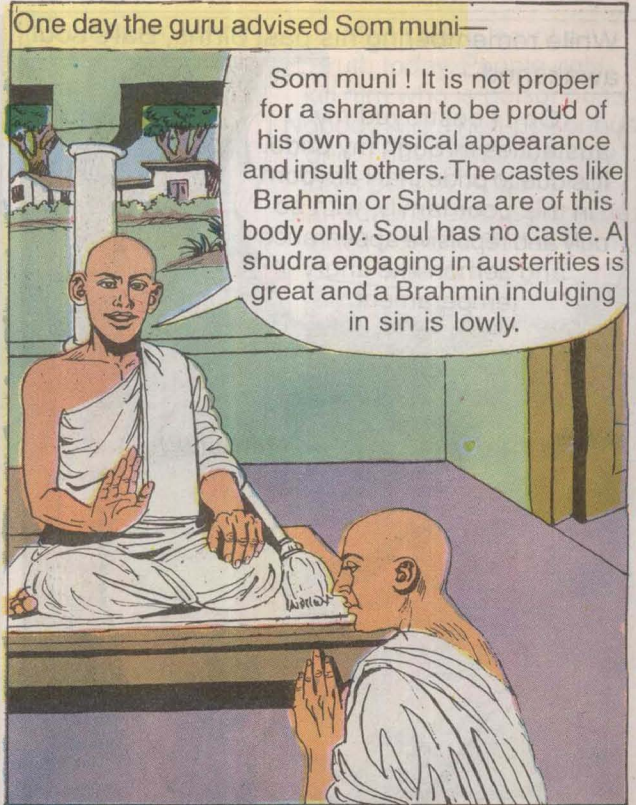
The ascetics complained—

Gurudev ! Som muni is very proud of his beauty and caste. He belittles other ascetics.

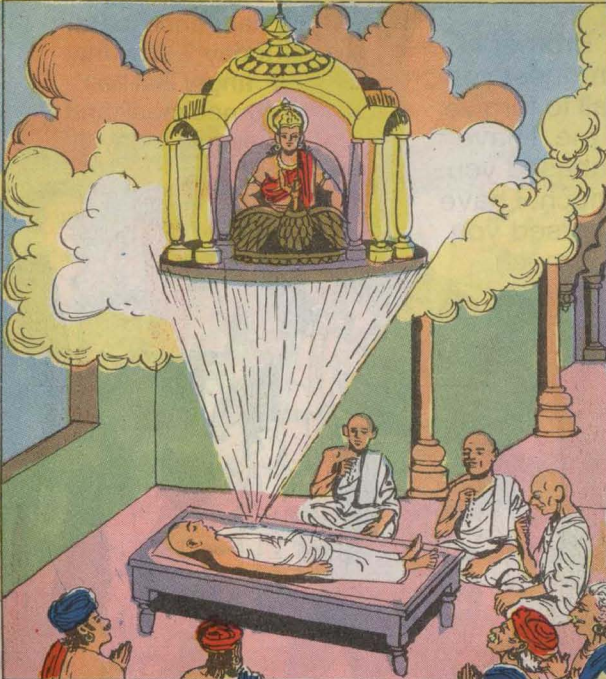


One day the guru advised Som muni—

Som muni ! It is not proper for a shraman to be proud of his own physical appearance and insult others. The castes like Brahmin or Shudra are of this body only. Soul has no caste. A shudra engaging in austerities is great and a Brahmin indulging in sin is lowly.

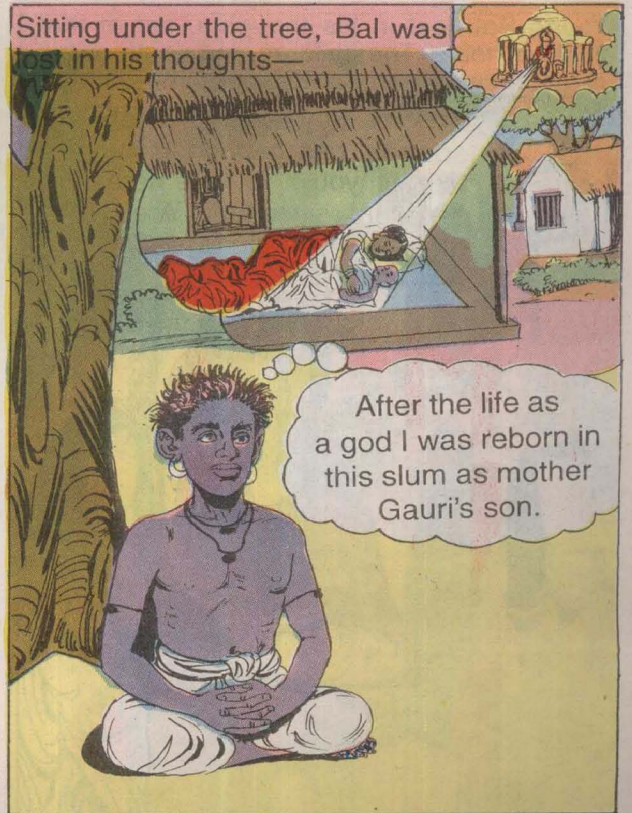


But Som muni could not get rid of his pride. Even the gains of his austerities and spiritual practices were nullified by his pride. After death he reincarnated as a god.



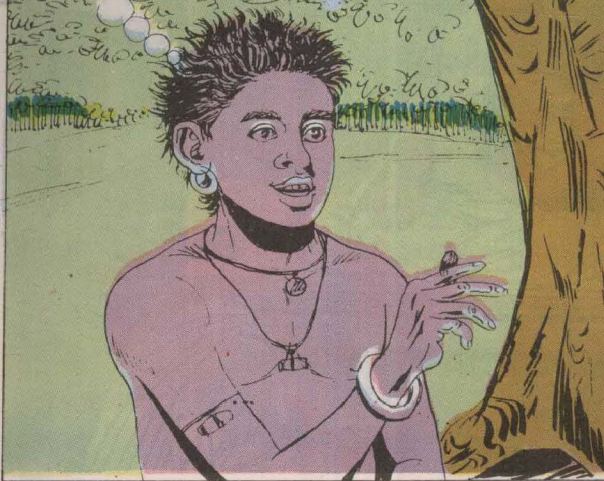
Sitting under the tree, Bal was lost in his thoughts—

After the life as a god I was reborn in this slum as mother Gauri's son.



While remembering his past births, Bal's soul awakened—

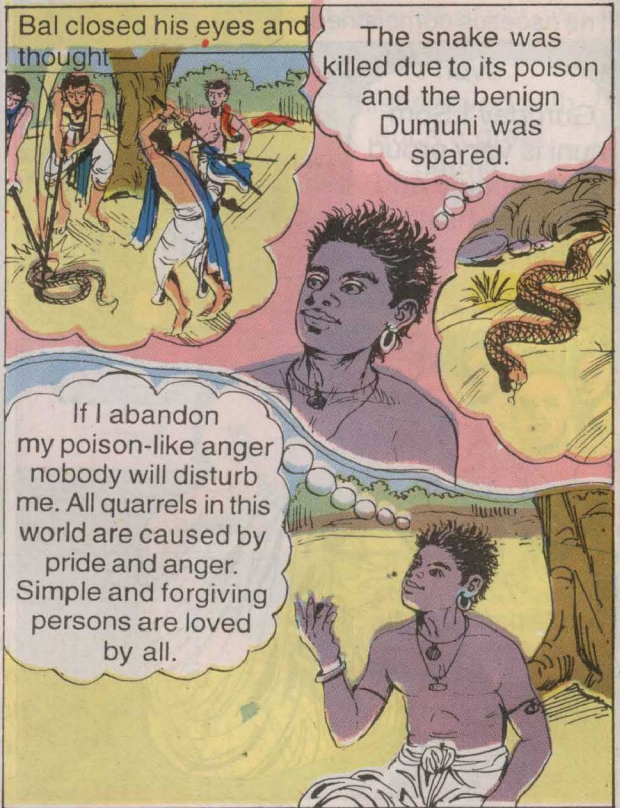
Oh ! I destroyed my austerities through my pride. It is due to pride that I am born in this poor family, with so ugly and repulsive appearance and demon-like angry temperament.



Bal closed his eyes and thought—

The snake was killed due to its poison and the benign Dumuhi was spared.

If I abandon my poison-like anger nobody will disturb me. All quarrels in this world are caused by pride and anger. Simple and forgiving persons are loved by all.



Young Bal, lost in his thoughts, sat at that spot for hours. The children and youth of the neighbourhood came and shook him—

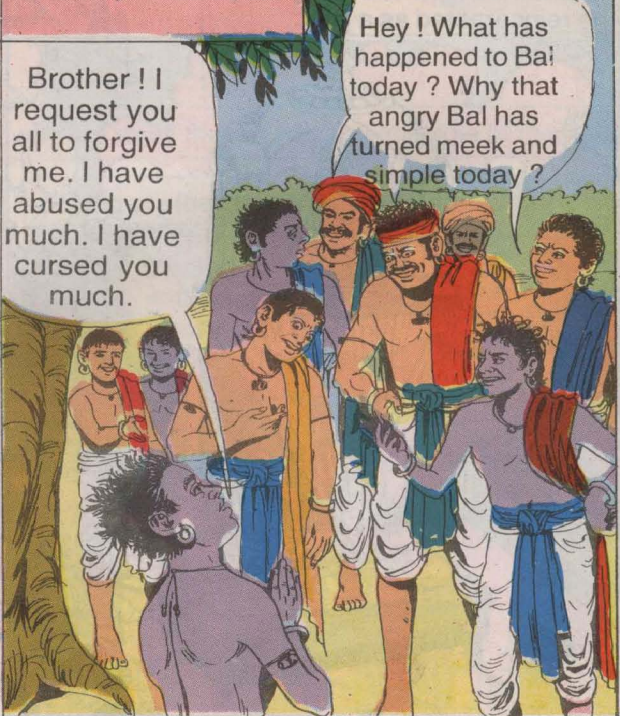
Hey blacky ! What has happened to you ? You are here since long. Are you sleeping ?

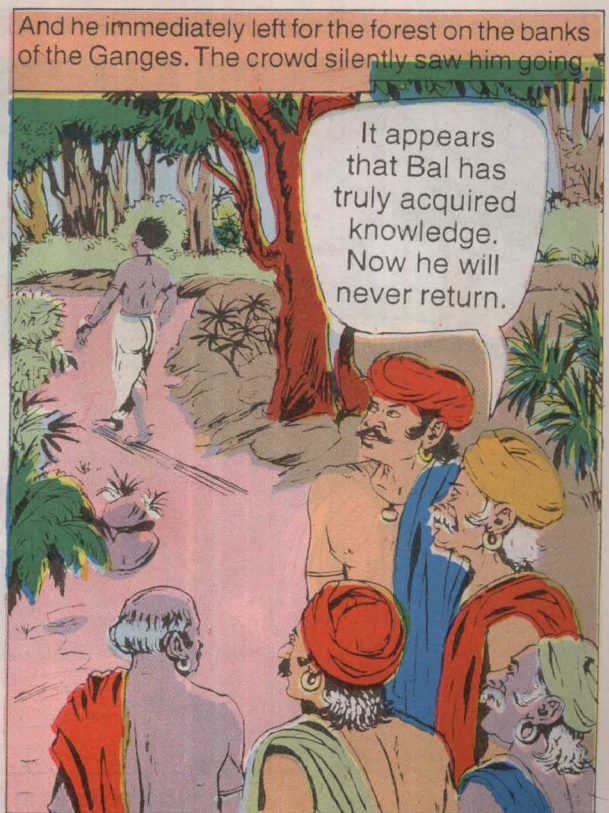
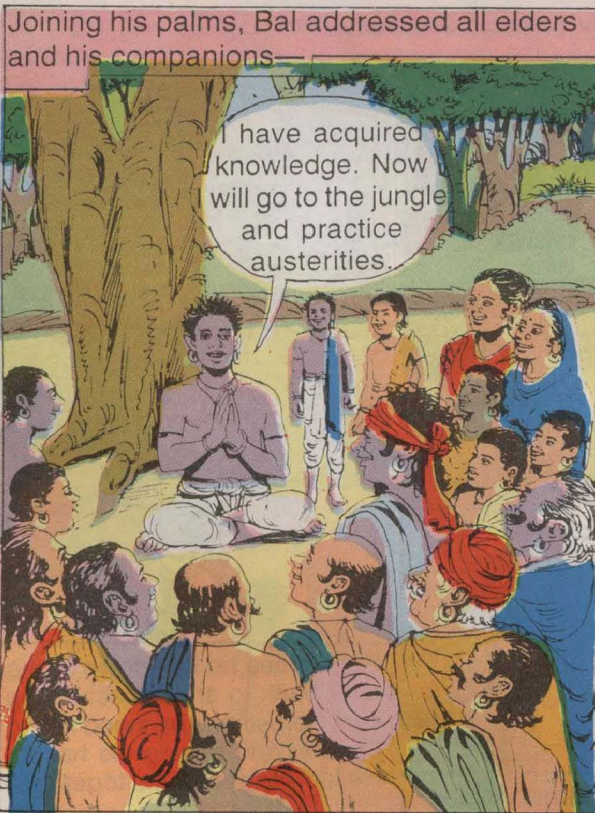
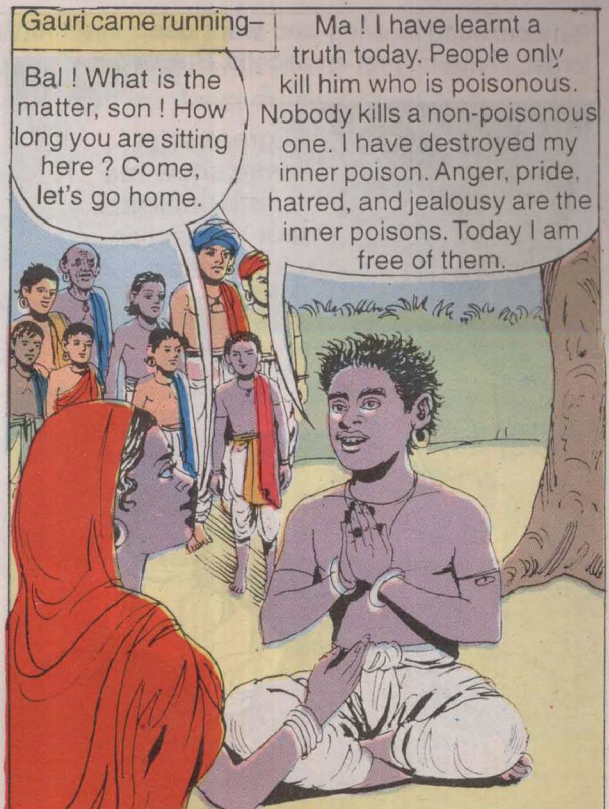
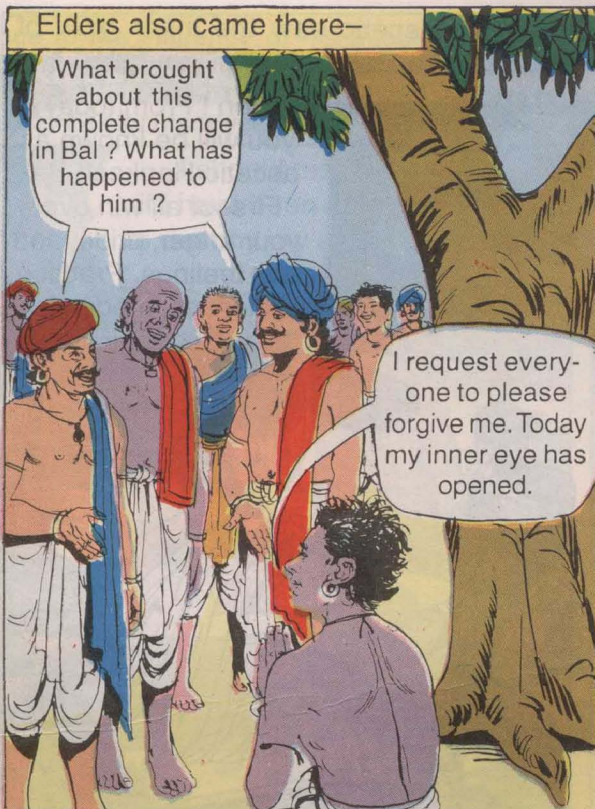


Bal opened his eyes. There was no anger or hatred on his face. His eyes were filled with love for everyone. He joined his palms and said—

Brother ! I request you all to forgive me. I have abused you much. I have cursed you much.

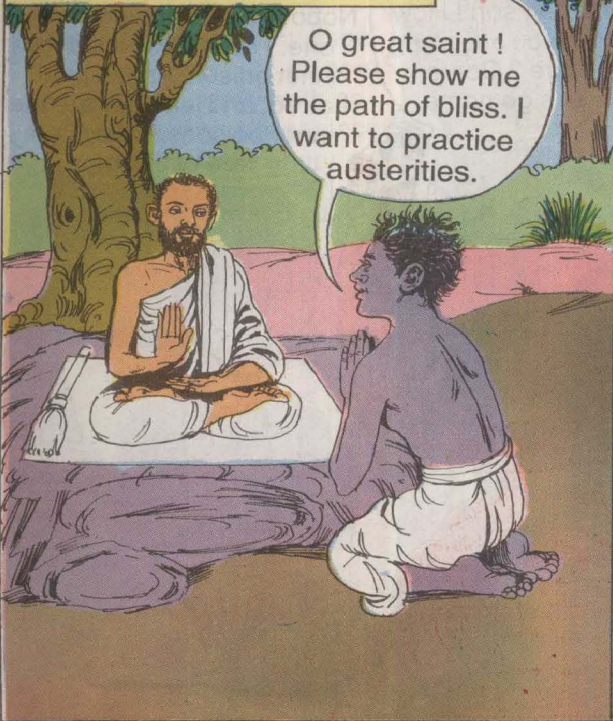
Hey ! What has happened to Bal today ? Why that angry Bal has turned meek and simple today ?





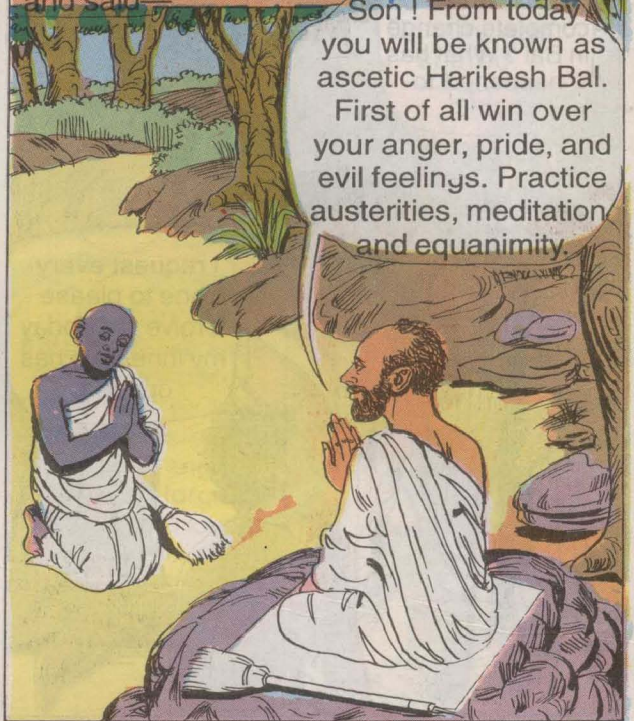
Bal continued walking and went deep into the forest. There he met an ascetic. Bal said—

O great saint !
Please show me
the path of bliss. I
want to practice
austerities.

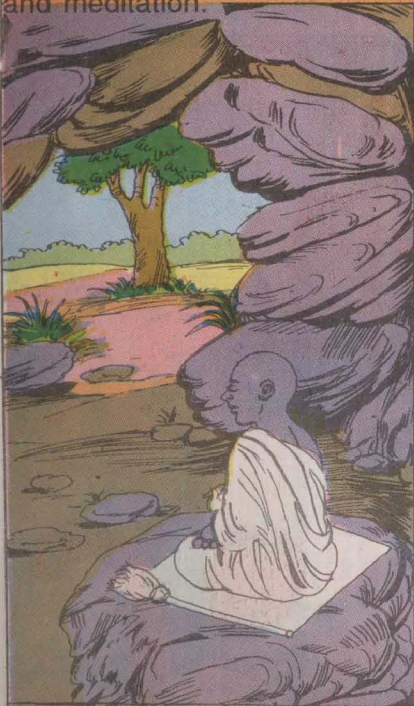


When the ascetic saw the inner glow of knowledge in Bal he formally initiated him and said—

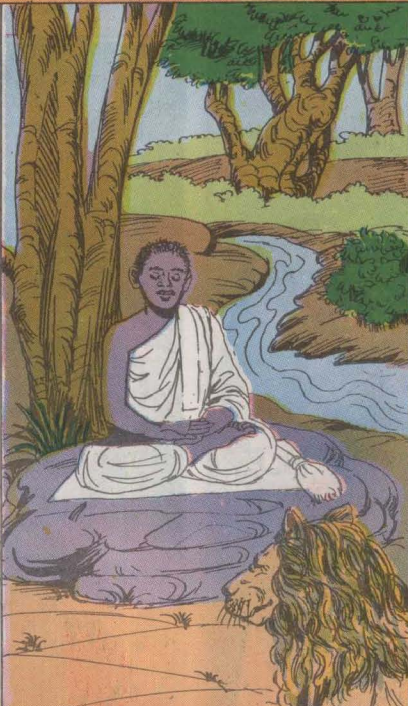
Son ! From today
you will be known as
ascetic Harikesh Bal.
First of all win over
your anger, pride, and
evil feelings. Practice
austerities, meditation
and equanimity.



On getting initiated ascetic Harikesh Bal since rely commenced austerities and meditation.



Sometimes he sat inside a cave
and practiced.

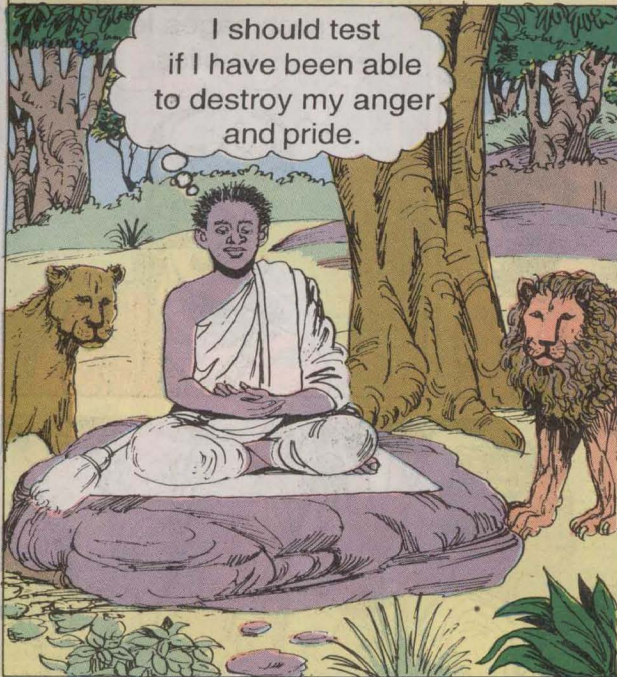


Sometimes in desolate jungles.

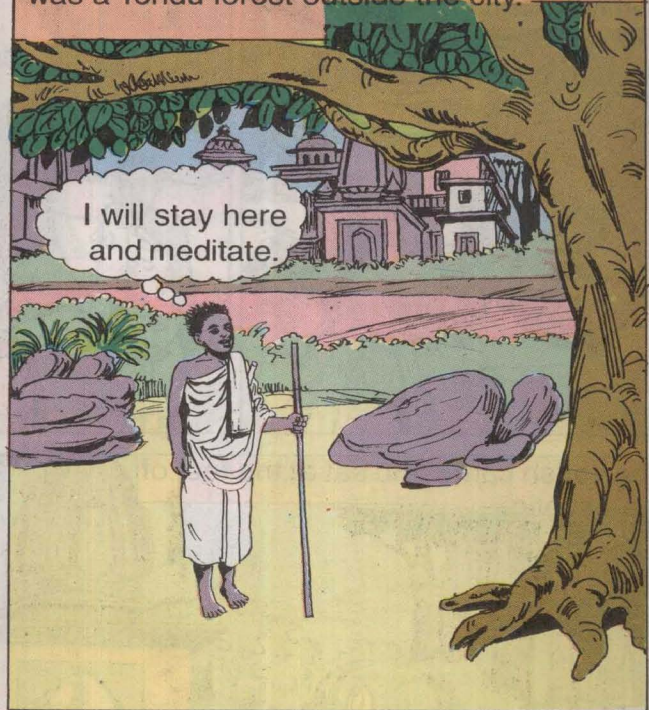


Sometimes he lied down at the
river bank to endure scorching
sun. Sometimes he stood facing
the sun and raising his hands.
He fasted for months together.

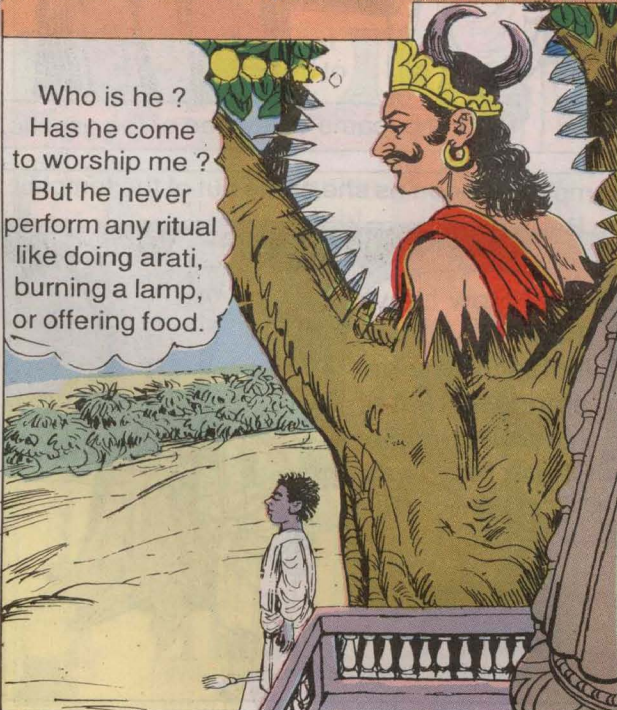
Due to the influence of his austerities, even violent wild animals came and sat near him. Ascetic Harikesh Bal practiced vigorous austerities for many years. One day he thought—



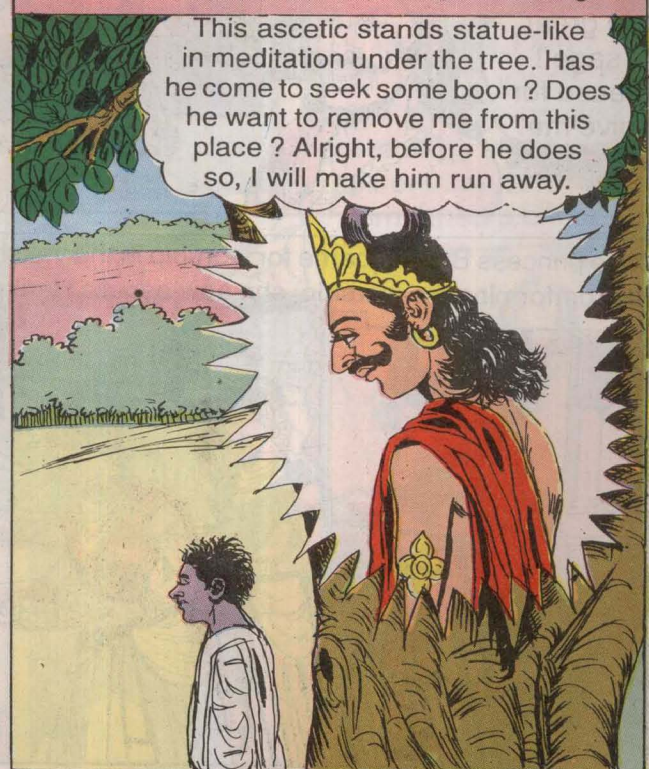
With these thoughts ascetic Harikesh Bal wandered and came to Varanasi city. There was a Tendu forest outside the city.



Harikesh Bal stood under a Tendu tree and started meditating. A yaksh[#] lived in that tree. When he saw the ascetic sitting at his place, he thought—



Gradually one month passed. The yaksh thought—

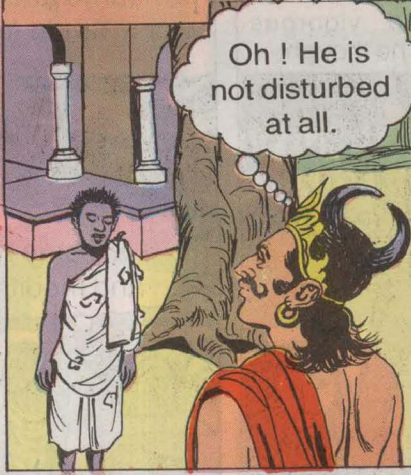


A type of lower gods.

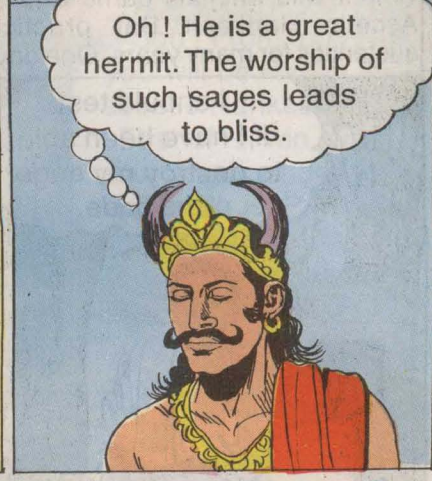
In order to frighten the ascetic the yaksh produced his fearsome laughter and presented his horrifying form.



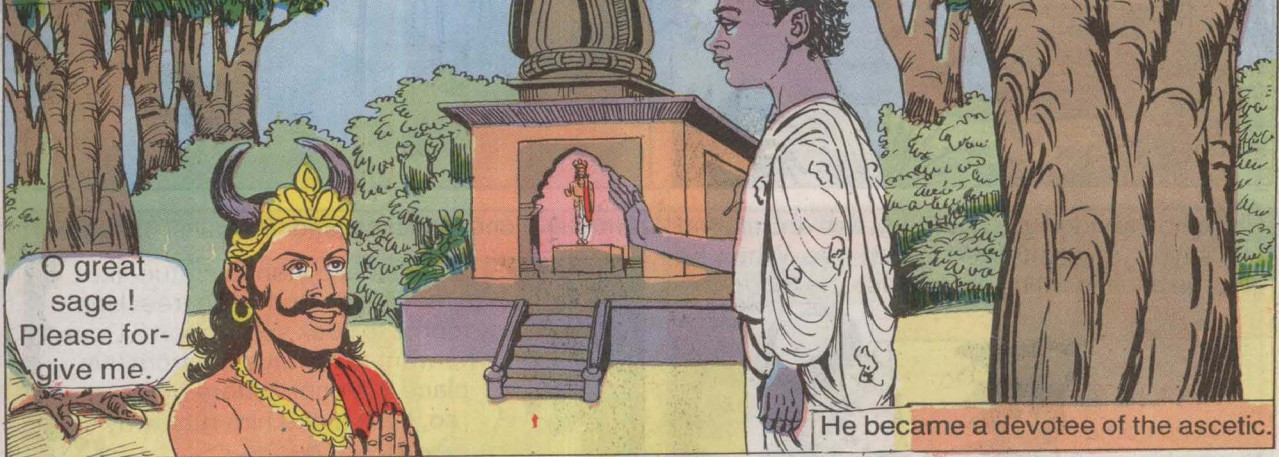
But the ascetic stood firm in meditation with his eyes closed.



Then the yaksh used his mental powers—

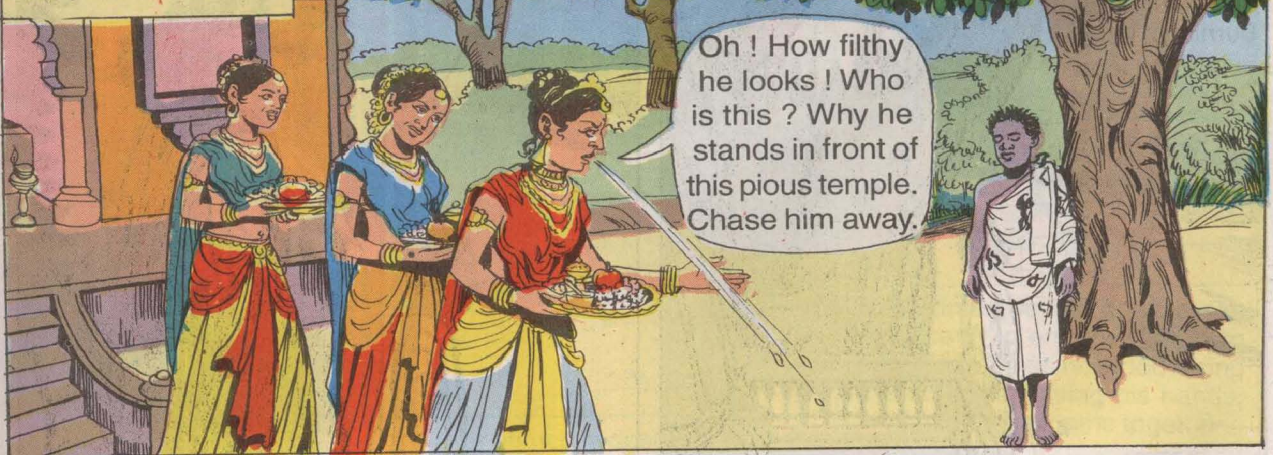


The yaksh came and sat at the feet of the ascetic

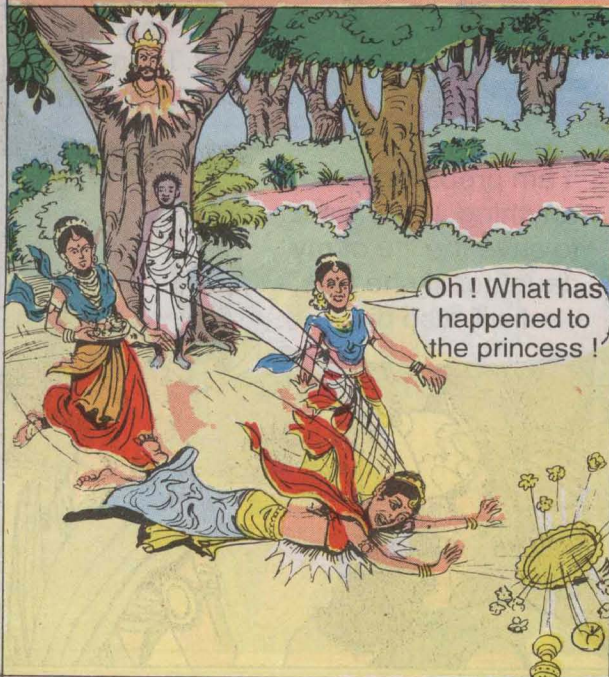


He became a devotee of the ascetic.

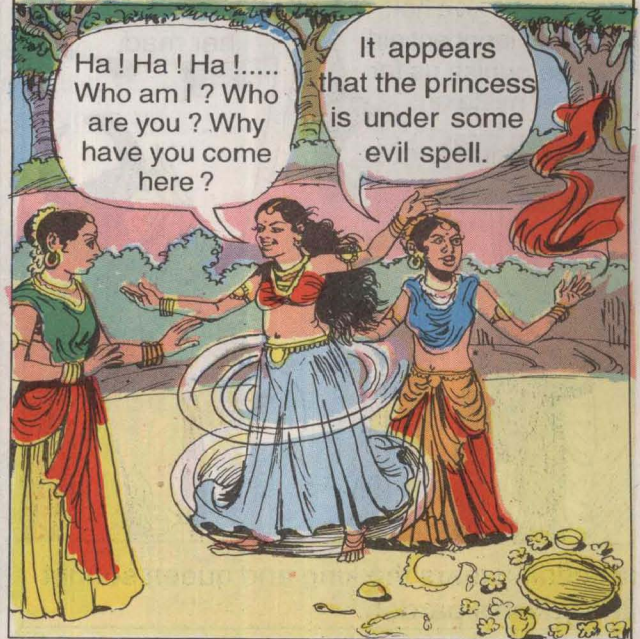
Once princess Bhadra came for worship in the yaksh temple. As soon as she came out of the temple after performing the worship, she saw ascetic Harikesh Bal



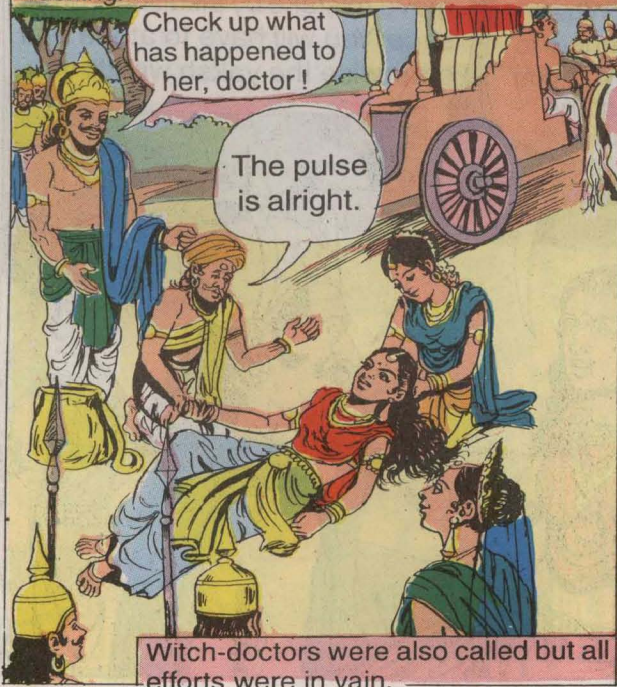
After these insulting words, the moment she turned the puja-plate in her hands fell down. She fainted and fell on the ground. The maids cried—



After some time the princess opened her eyes. She turned insane and gave a foolish grin. She pounded her head with her palms, disheveled her hair, gave a mad laughter, and jumped and danced waving her hands—

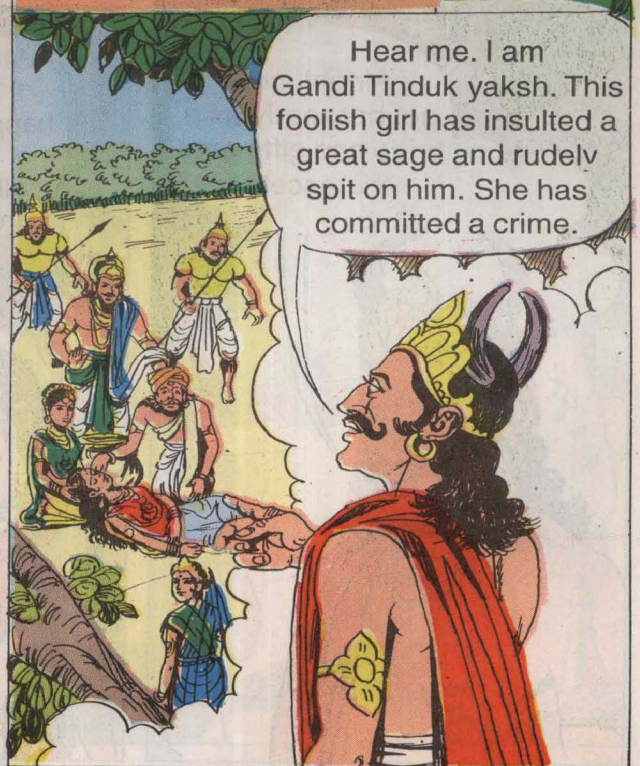


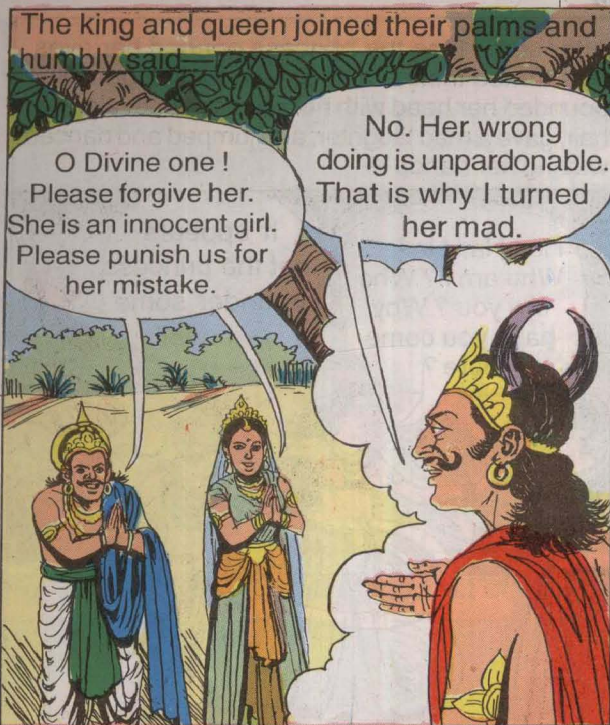
Even 8-10 maids failed to hold and control her. The guards helped bring her under some control and the king was informed. Doctors also came rushing.



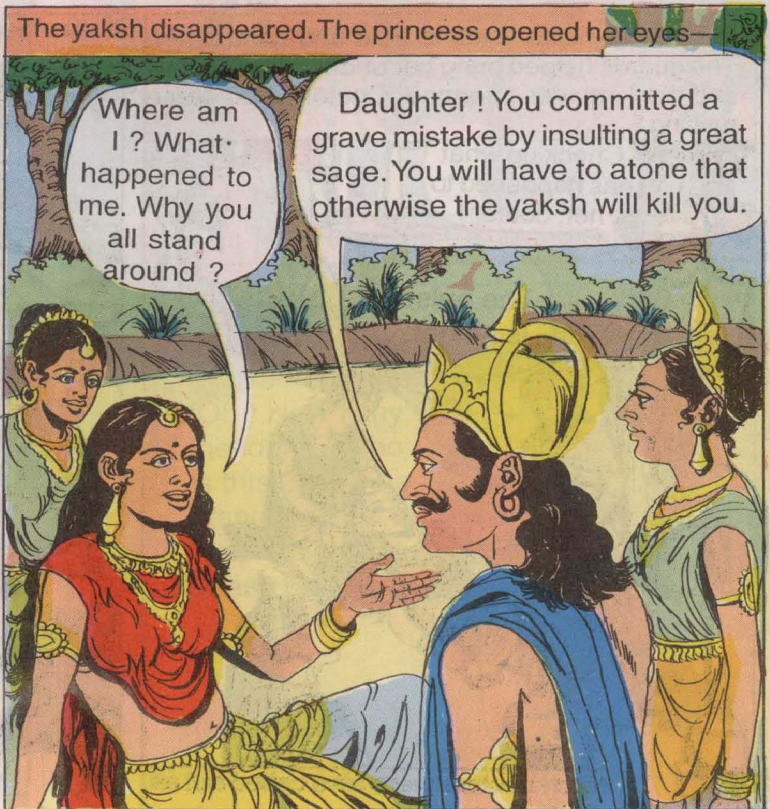
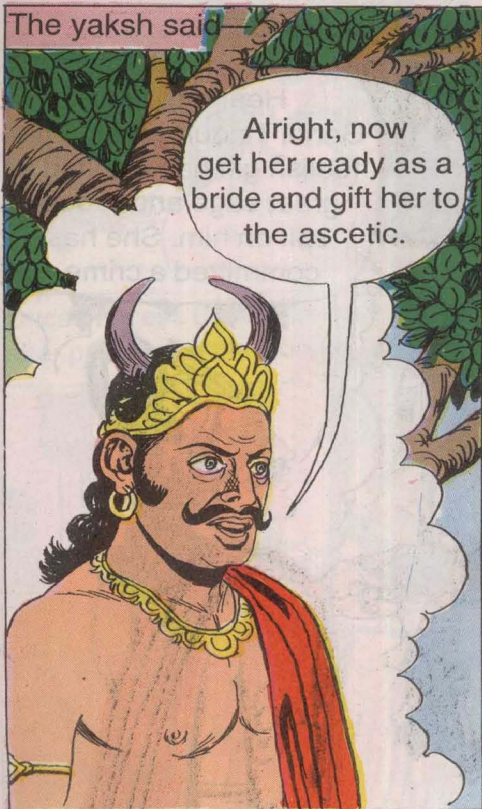
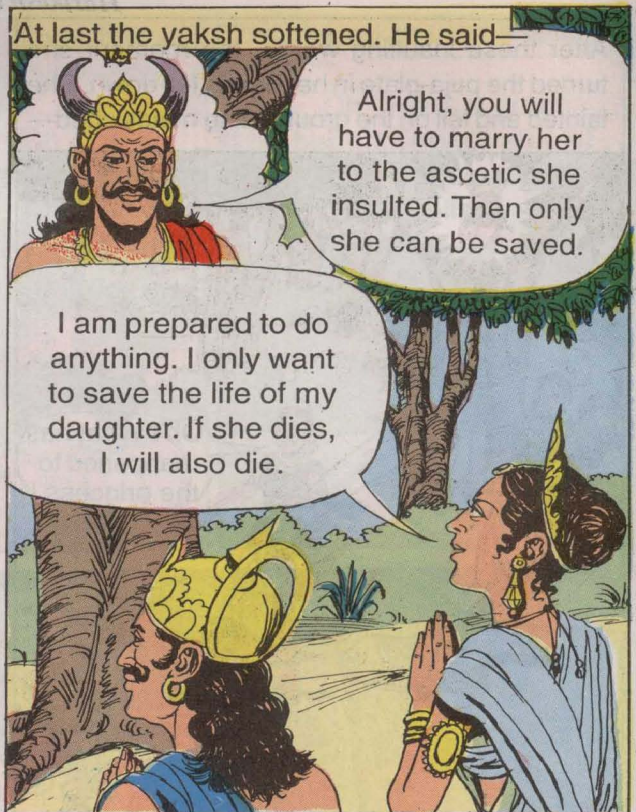
Witch-doctors were also called but all efforts were in vain.

It was then that the yaksh appeared and said—





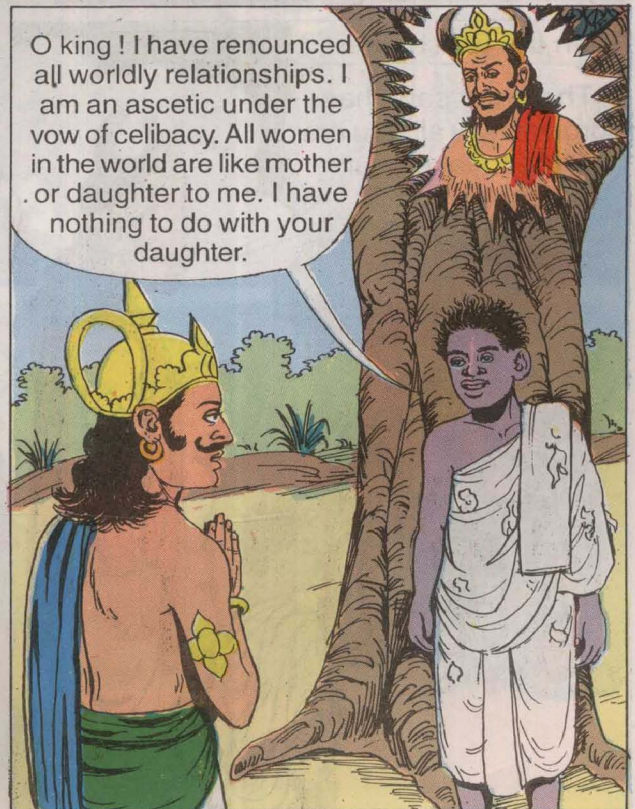
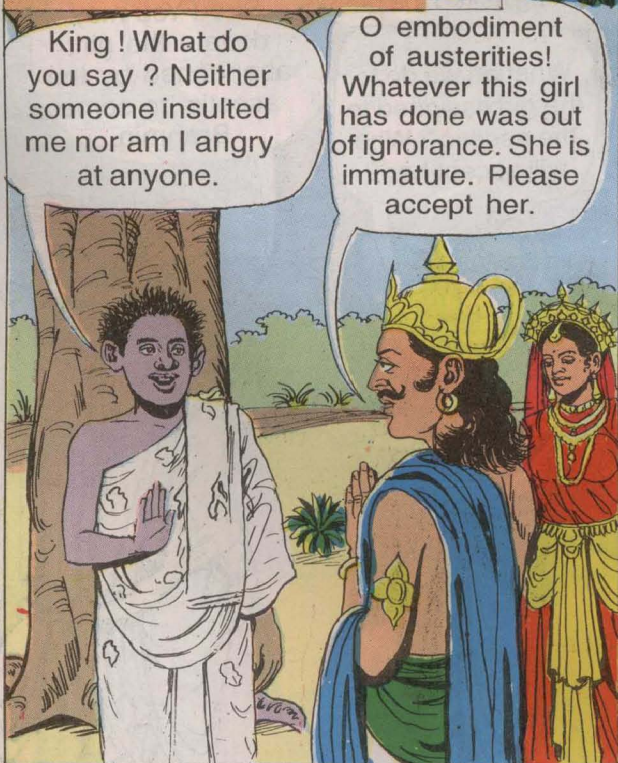
Shedding tears the king and queen sought the yaksh's pardon.



They persuaded the princess and adorned her like a bride. The king and his family came to Tinduk jungle with a lot of dowry and gifts accompanied by band and music. The king brought bride Bhadra before the ascetic and said—



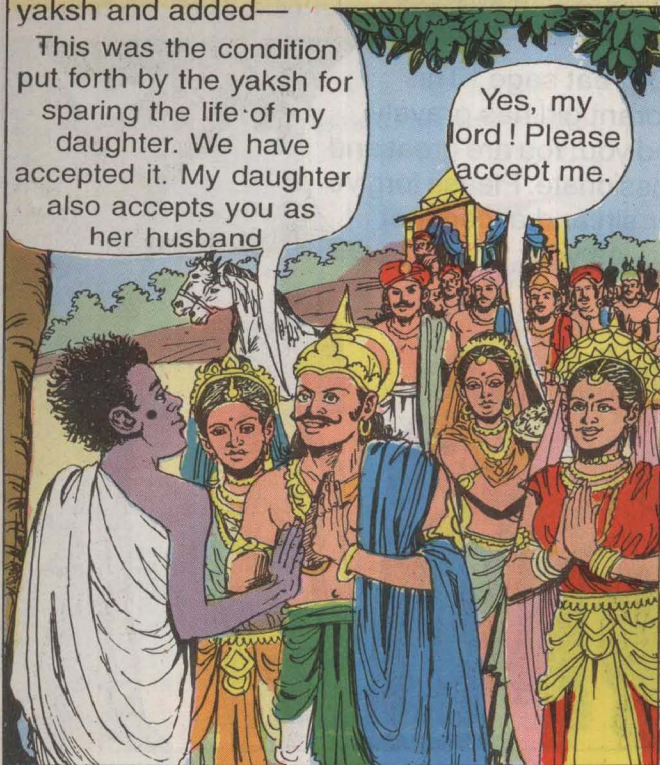
Ascetic Harikesh Bal opened his eyes—



The king narrated the incident as told by the yaksh and added—

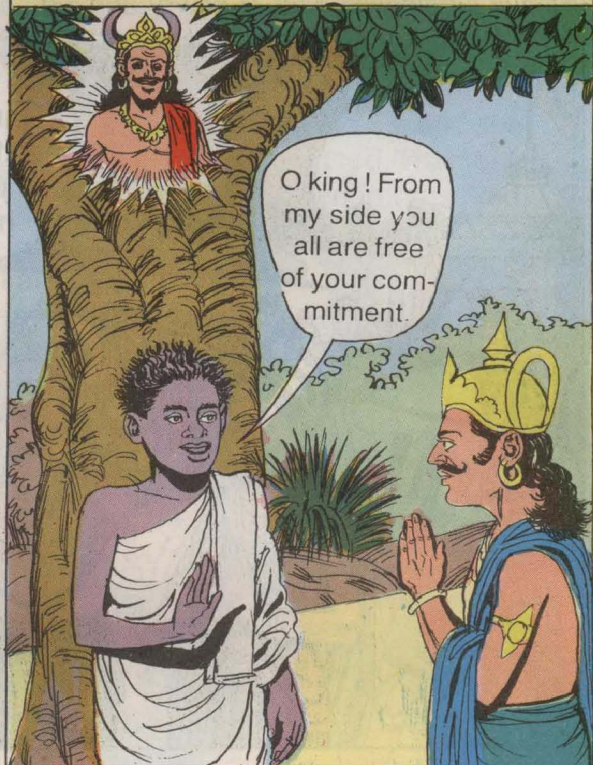
This was the condition put forth by the yaksh for sparing the life of my daughter. We have accepted it. My daughter also accepts you as her husband

Yes, my lord ! Please accept me.



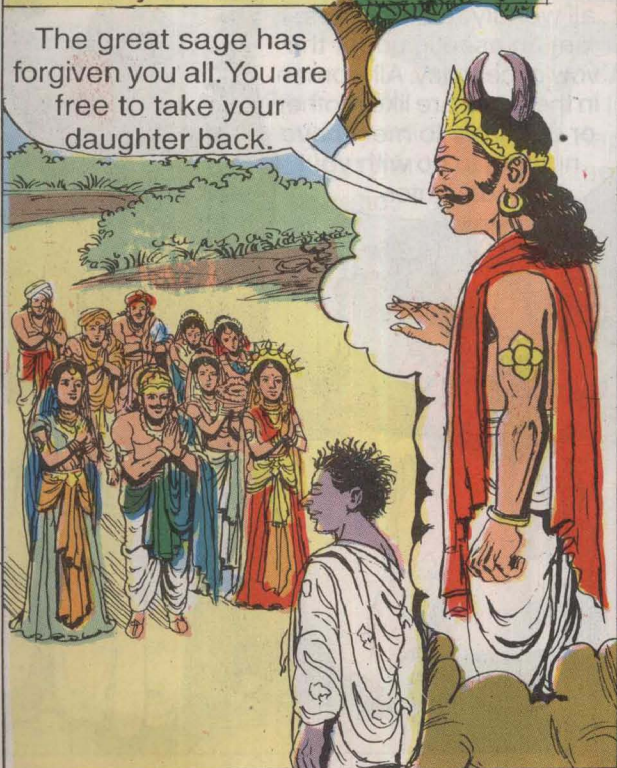
The ascetic explained about his vow and said—

O king ! From my side you all are free of your commitment.



Then the yaksh uttered from the sky—

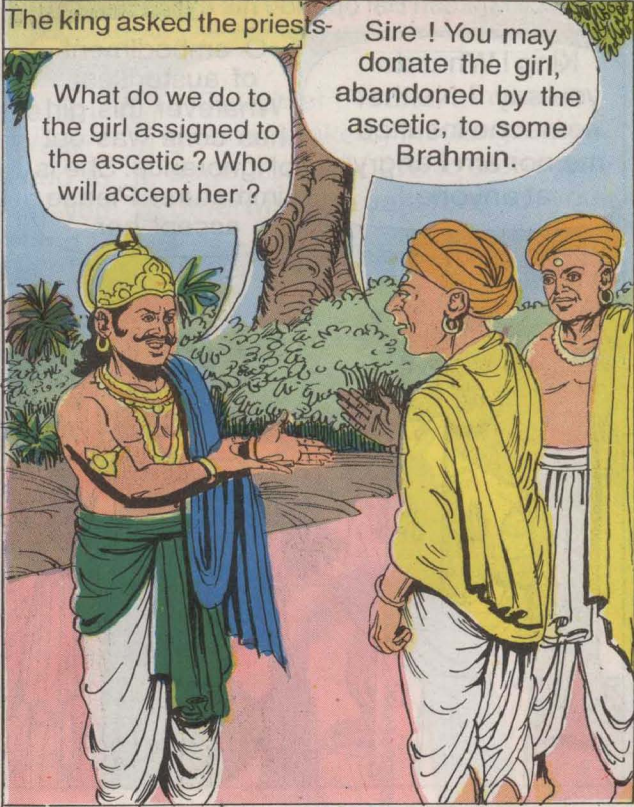
The great sage has forgiven you all. You are free to take your daughter back.



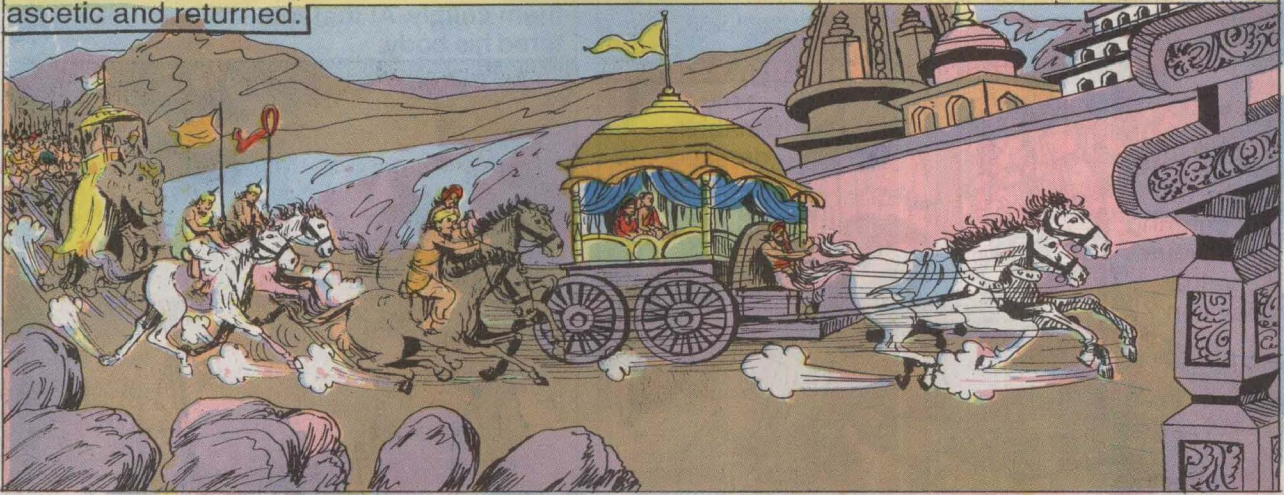
The king asked the priests—

What do we do to the girl assigned to the ascetic ? Who will accept her ?

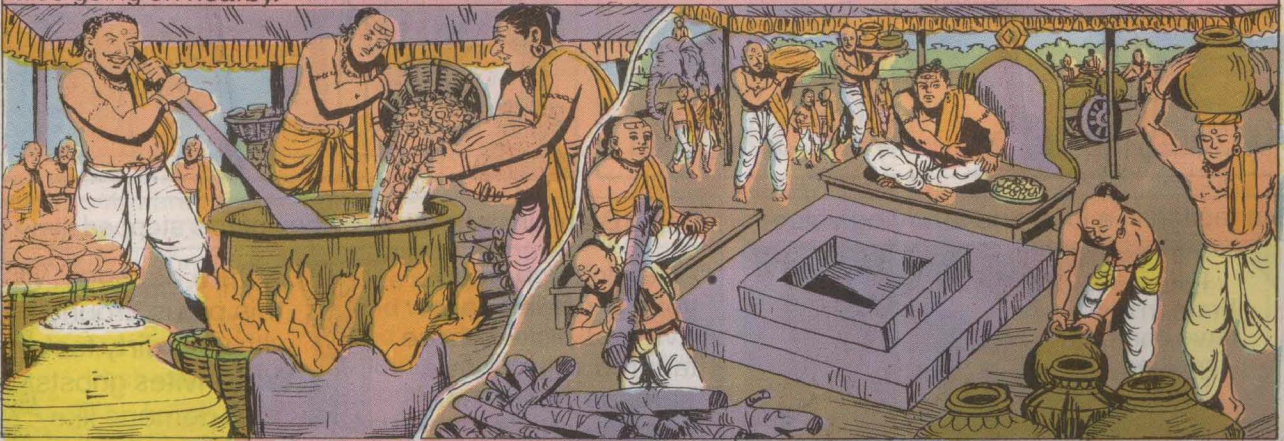
Sire ! You may donate the girl, abandoned by the ascetic, to some Brahmin.



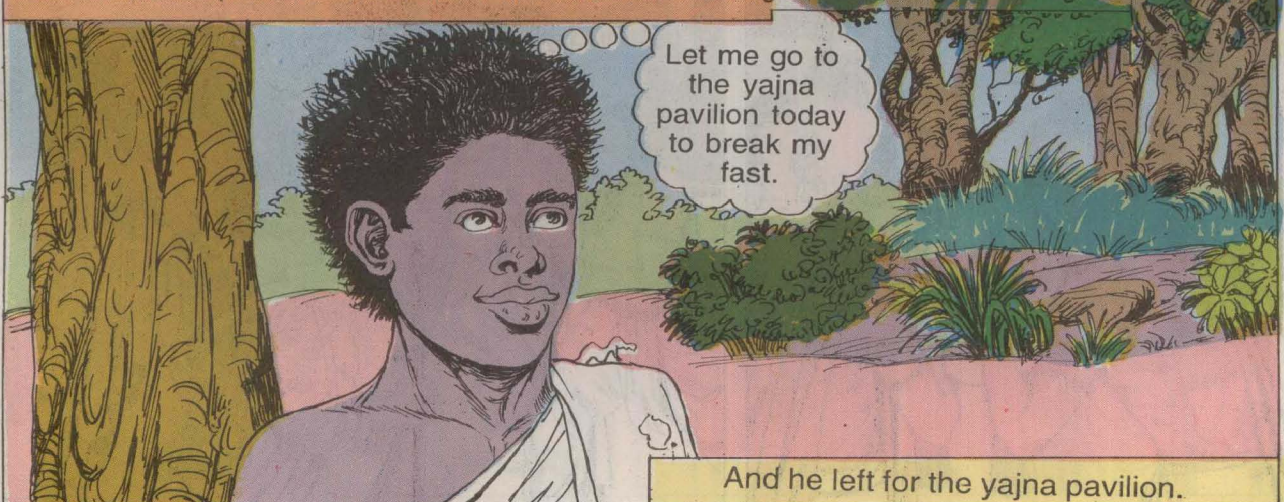
The king married the princess to the state priest Rudradev. Everyone paid homage to the ascetic and returned.



To celebrate the marriage, Rudradev organized a yajna[#] and feast. Hundreds of Brahmins were moving in and around the pavilion. Students were busy cooking food. Preparations for the yajna were also going on nearby.

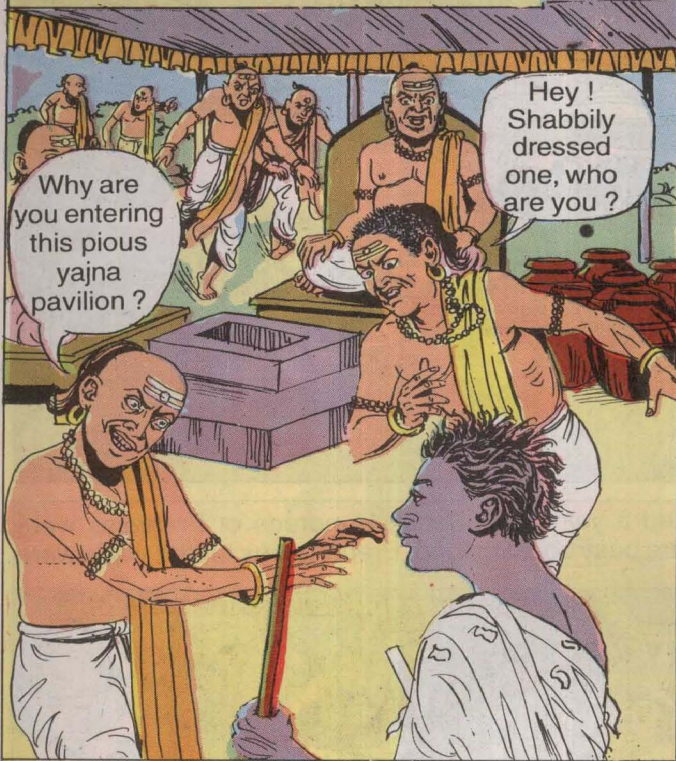


One month had passed since Muni Harikesh Bal was fasting and standing. He thought



The Vedic rite of offerings to deities.

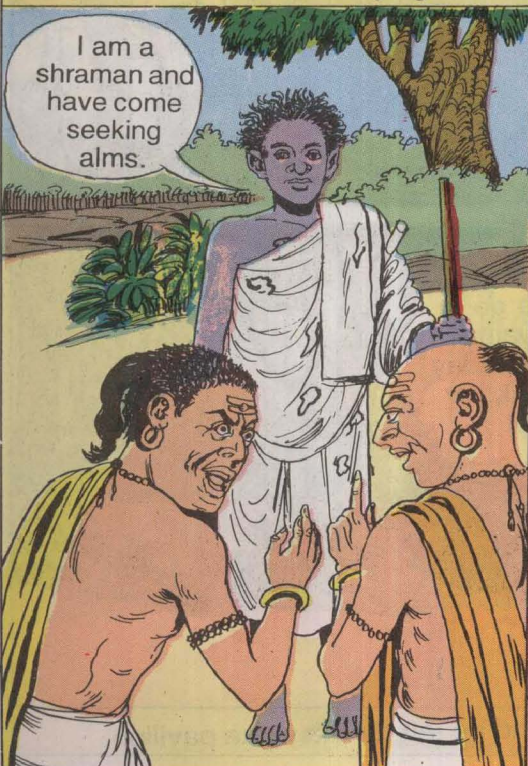
The Brahmins in the pavilion saw the ascetic coming—



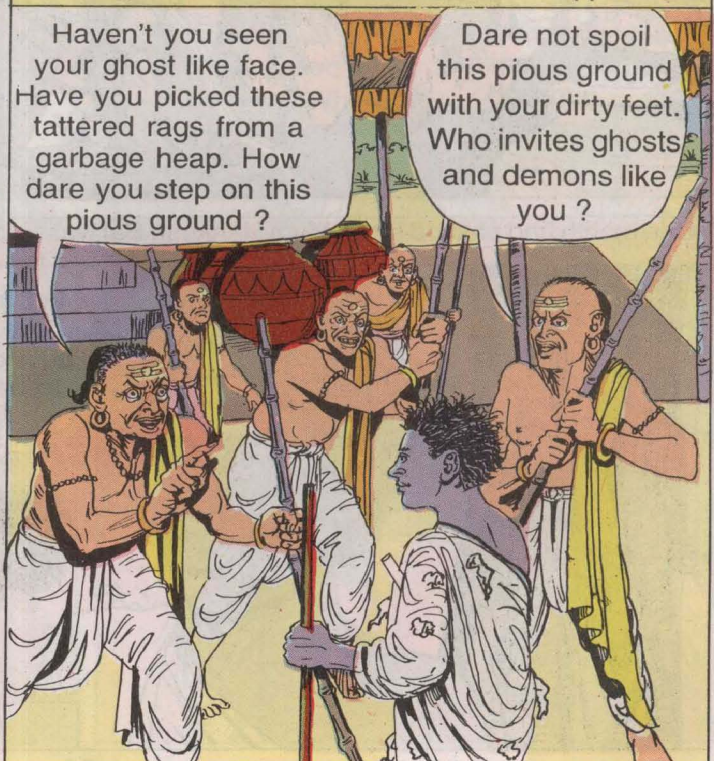
The muni stopped on the spot and looked at them calmly. At that moment that yaksh entered his body.



He replied in a loud and terrifying voice—



Some Brahmins with sticks in their hands stopped him—



The yaksh in the ascetic's body said

Gentlemen ! I am a shraman who has renounced household and lives on alms. You are distributing a lot of food. If you could only give me a little from the leftovers.....

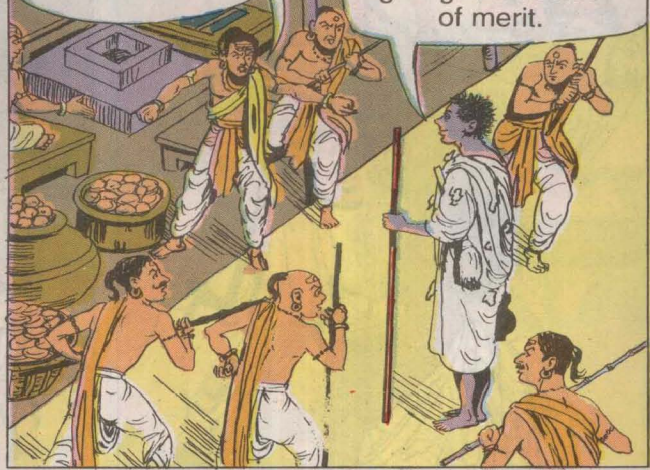


At that moment host Rudradev arrived. When he saw the ugly ascetic in rags he lost his temper and said—

O Rudradev !

As a farmer sows seeds in good as well as bad part of his land, you should also donate food to a shraman with devotion. For such giving is a source of merit.

This food is only for Brahmins and not for lowly people like you. Get out at once.



Idiot ! You are trying to teach me. Only the scholarly Brahmins are sources of merit in this world. Dirt like you is worst than a trash-can.

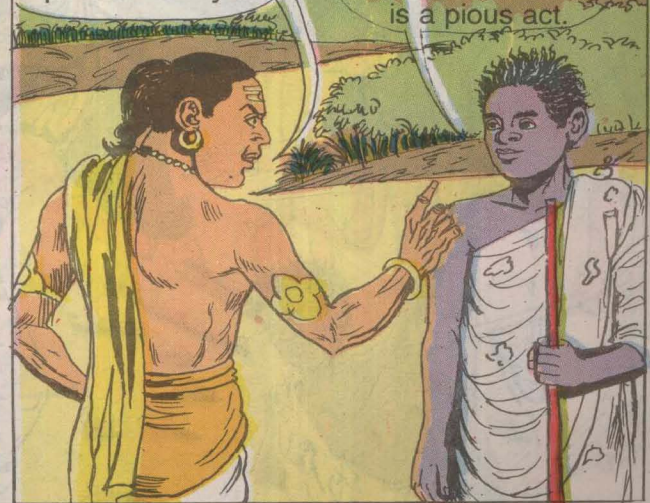
O Brahmin ! Those Brahmins who are without true knowledge and conduct, and whose life is filled with violence, untruth, anger and pride are not sources of piety.



These words of the ascetic acted as fuel for the anger of Rudradev. He stepped ahead—

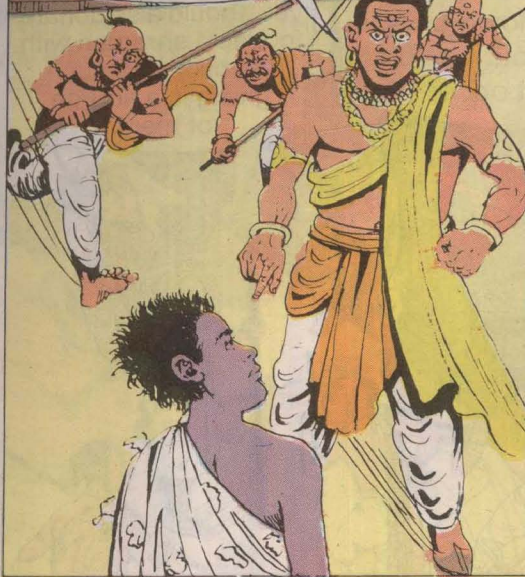
O great Brahmin ! Abandon your anger and ego and think for a moment. It is not the appearance or family of a monk that matters. It is his sacrifice that matters. To give to a detached is a pious act.

Stop this nonsense. I will prefer this food to rot rather than give it to an unholy person like you.

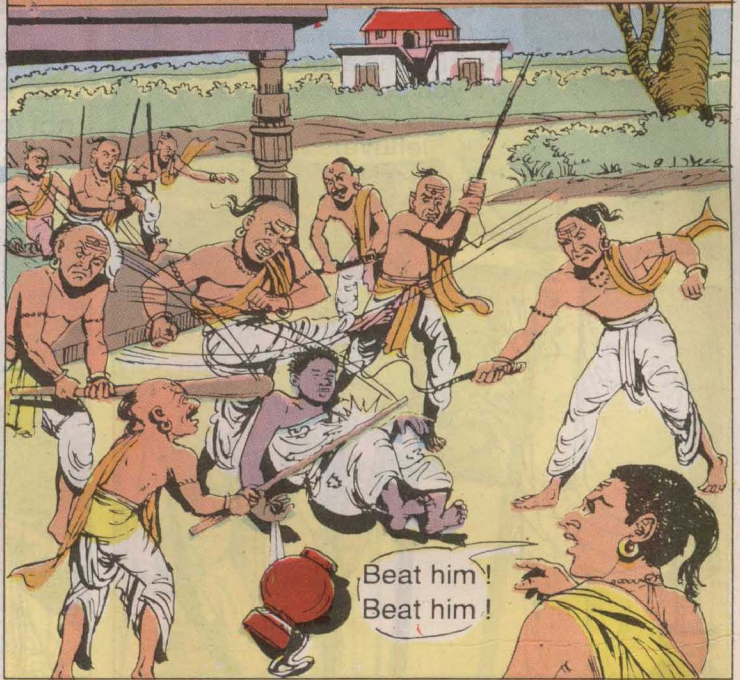


Rudradev lost his balance

Hey ! Is there someone who can thrash this impostor with sticks and throw him out. Hold him from the neck and push him out.

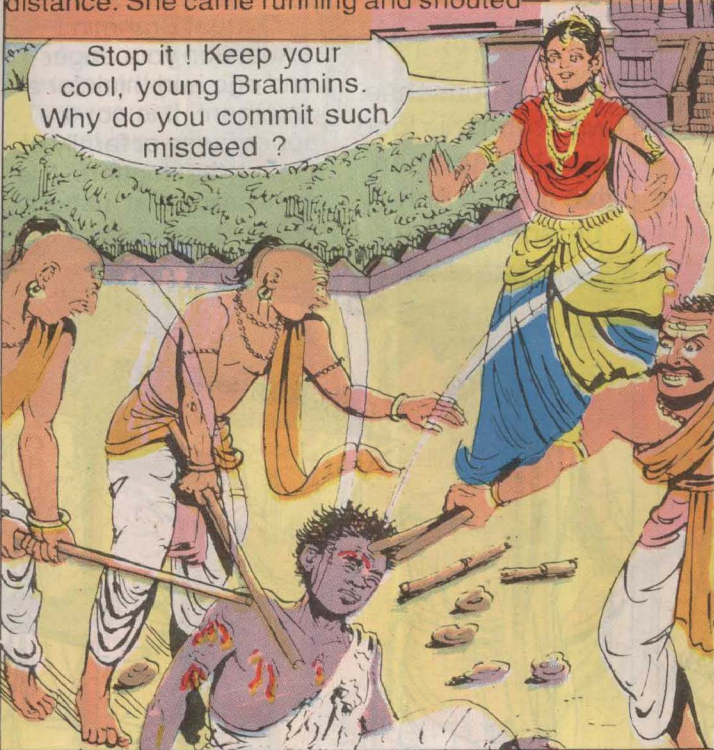


Many students and cooks from the kitchen, and teachers came rushing brandishing sticks, canes, rods, large spoons etc. They started beating the ascetic with whatever they could lay hands on.



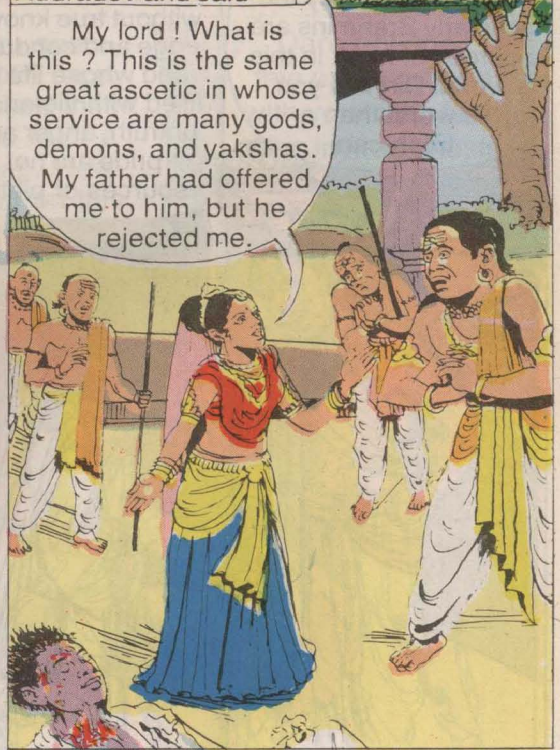
Bhadra, the wife of Rudradev, saw all this from a distance. She came running and shouted—

Stop it ! Keep your cool, young Brahmins. Why do you commit such misdeed ?



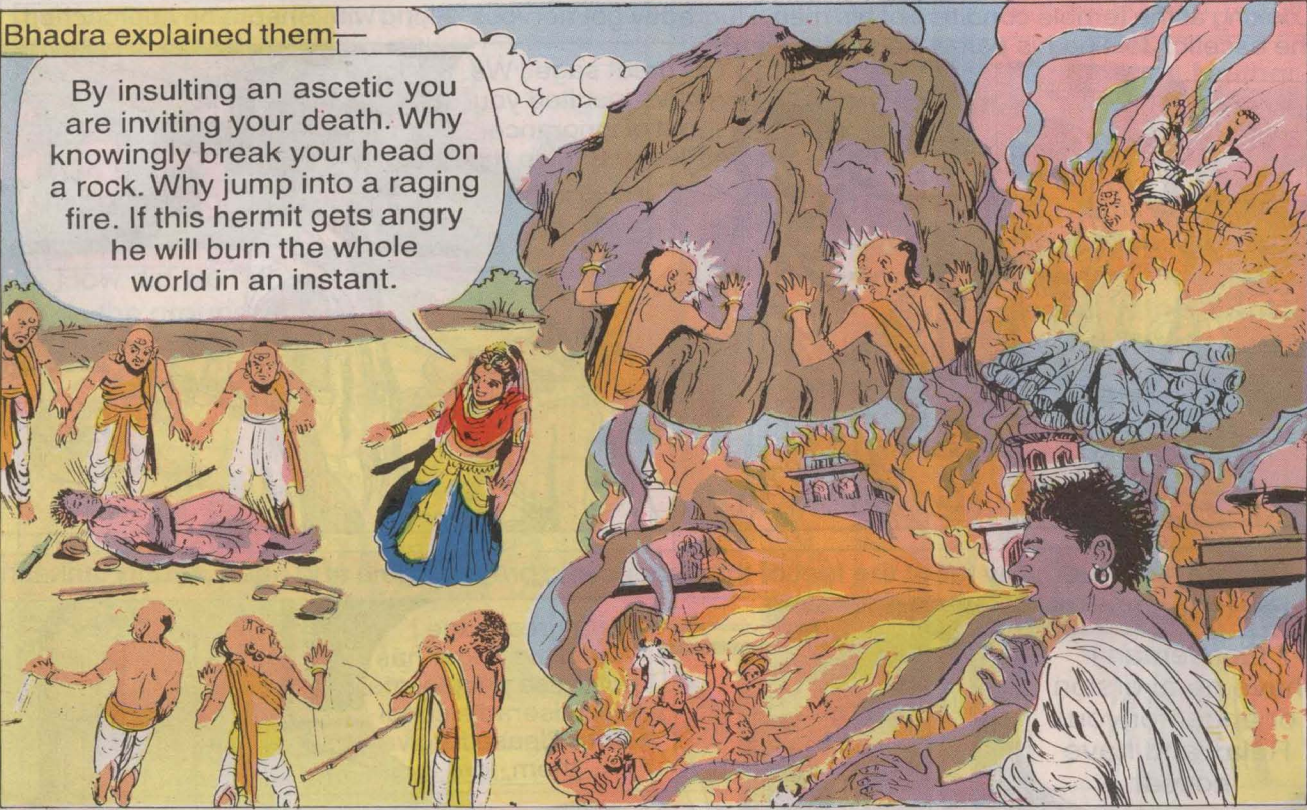
On reaching there, Bhadra stopped Rudradev and said—

My lord ! What is this ? This is the same great ascetic in whose service are many gods, demons, and yakshas. My father had offered me to him, but he rejected me.

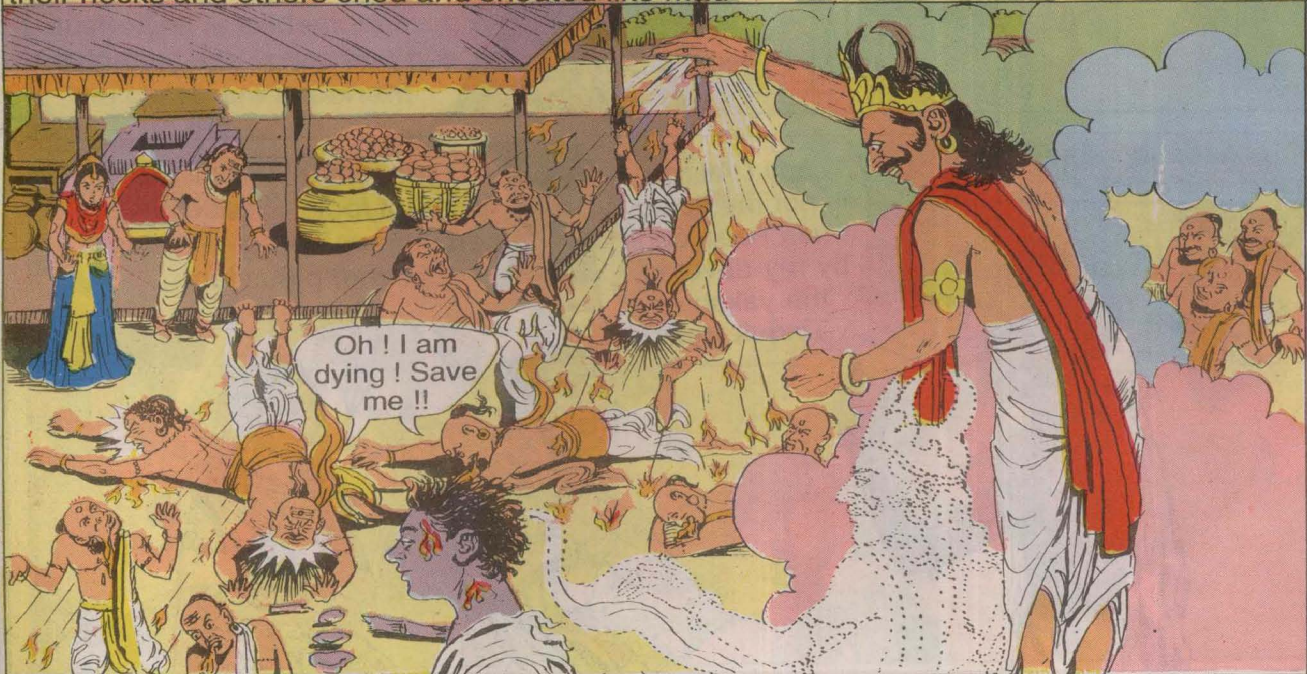


Bhadra explained them—

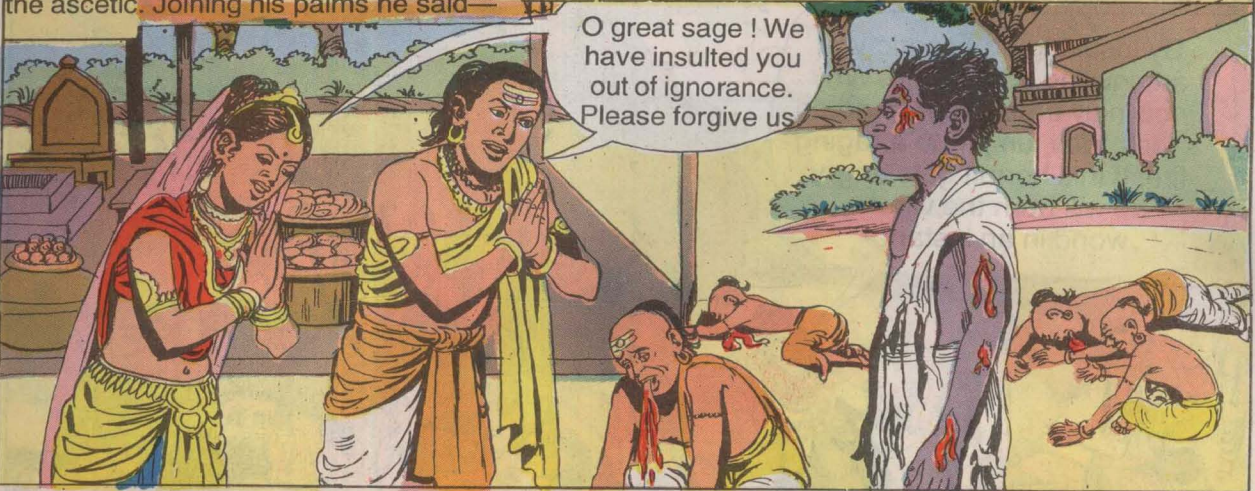
By insulting an ascetic you are inviting your death. Why knowingly break your head on a rock. Why jump into a raging fire. If this hermit gets angry he will burn the whole world in an instant.



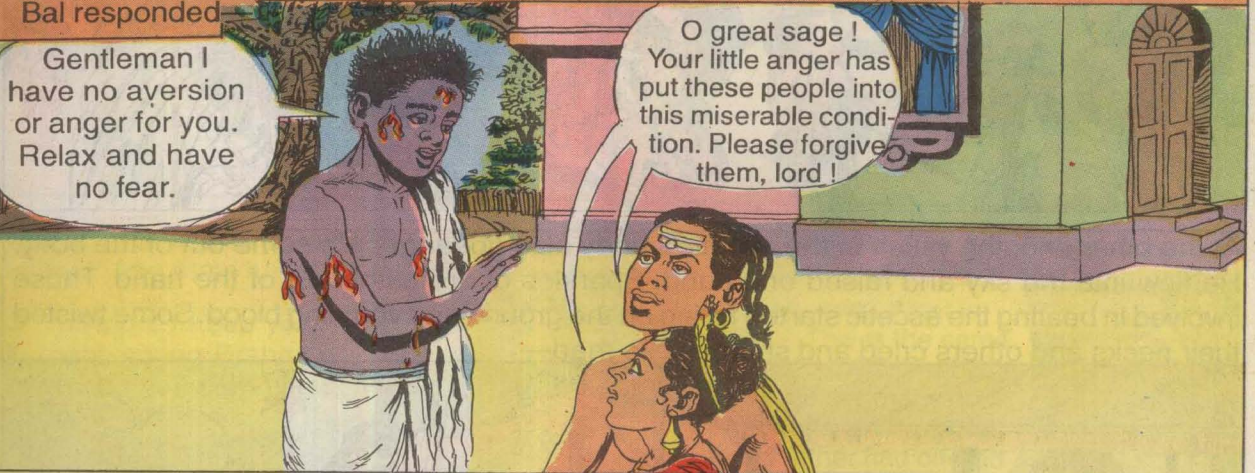
At the other end, the yaksh in the ascetic's body also got angry. He came out of the body. He flew into the sky and raised one hand. Sparkles of fire came out of the hand. Those involved in beating the ascetic started falling on the ground and vomiting blood. Some twisted their necks and others cried and shouted like mad—



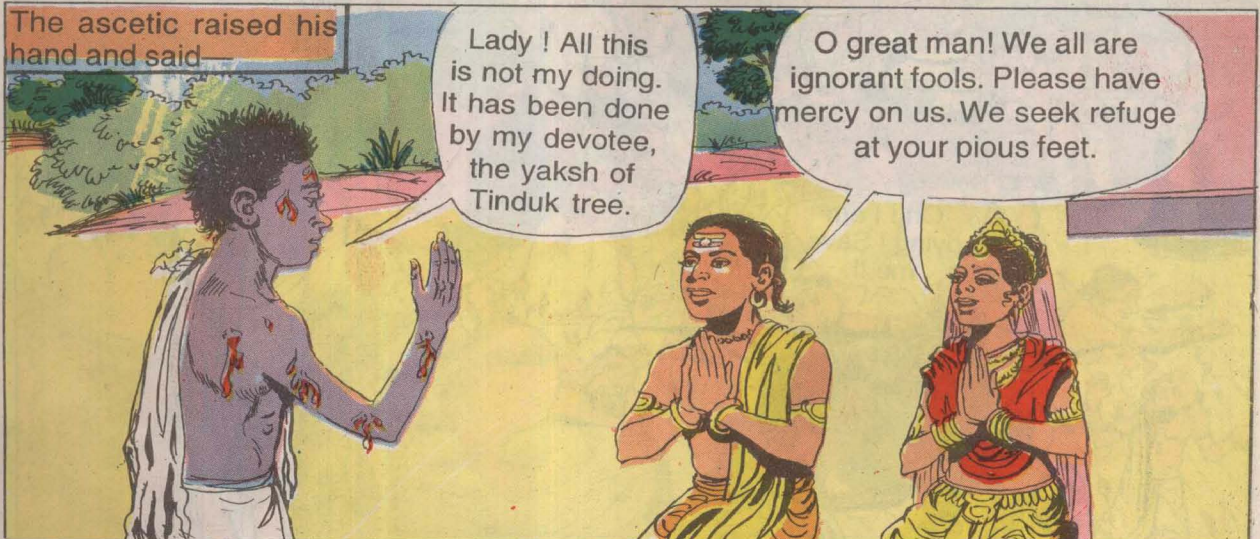
Looking at the terrible condition of his men, Rudradev got nervous. Along with Bhadra he approached the ascetic. Joining his palms he said —



Bhadra and Rudradev fell at the feet of the ascetic and prayed again and again. Muni Harikesh Bal responded —



The ascetic raised his hand and said —



Seeing Rudradev begging forgiveness from the ascetic, the yaksh in the sky waved his hand. All the students and teachers got up.

Oh ! What happened to us ?

How did we fall on the ground ?

When Rudradev explained everything they all begged forgiveness from the ascetic.

Then Rudradev and Bhadra joined their palms and said—

O great sage !
Food is ready in our yajna-pavilion.
If a hermit like you accepts something, the remaining food will turn into ambrosia.

O Brahmins ! Neither I was angry due to your ill-treatment nor am I pleased by your praise. I dwell in my equanimity. If it pleases you to offer me alms I will accept without any hesitation.

The ascetic entered the yajna pavilion. As soon as he accepted food the sky was filled with sounds of divine drums and music. The gods showered flowers, divine gems and gold and silver coins.

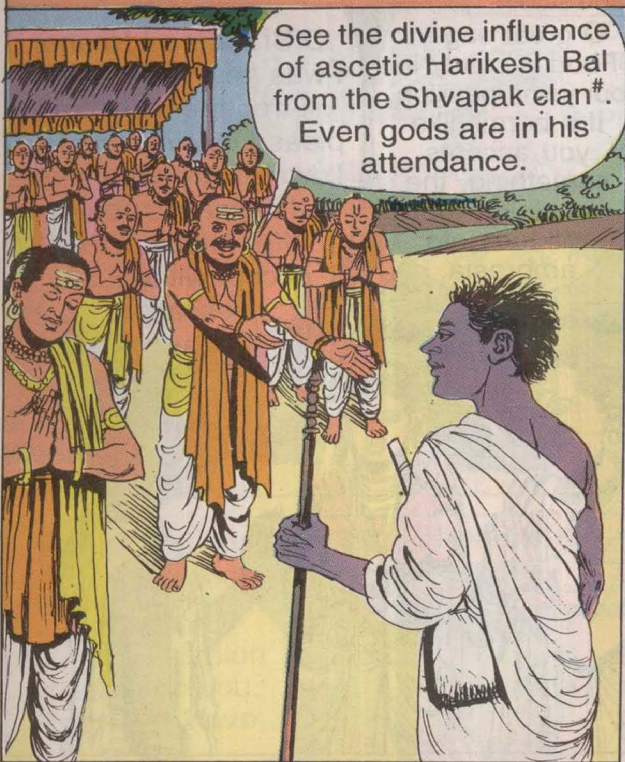
See ! The glory of austerities is evident today. Austerities and vows, and not the caste, are important in this world.

Great offering !
Great offering !



The chief priest pointed at the ascetic and said—

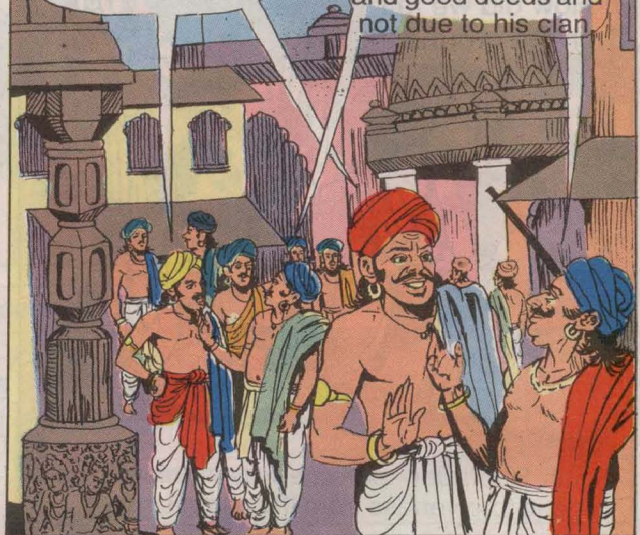
See the divine influence of ascetic Harikesh Bal from the Shvapak clan[#]. Even gods are in his attendance.



All around Varanasi people talked about this—

Brother ! Did you see the power of austerities. Ascetic Harikesh Bal from the Shvapak clan is revered today even by gods.

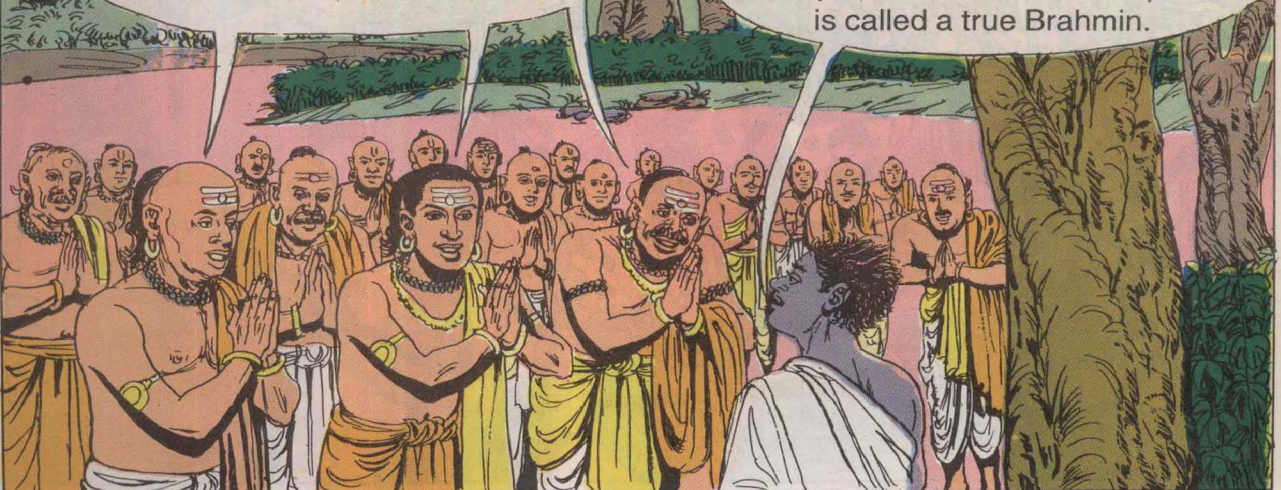
Yes, brother ! What the ascetic has said is, indeed, true. It is not the clan but the austerities and conduct that is important in life. Man is great for his austerities and good deeds and not due to his clan.



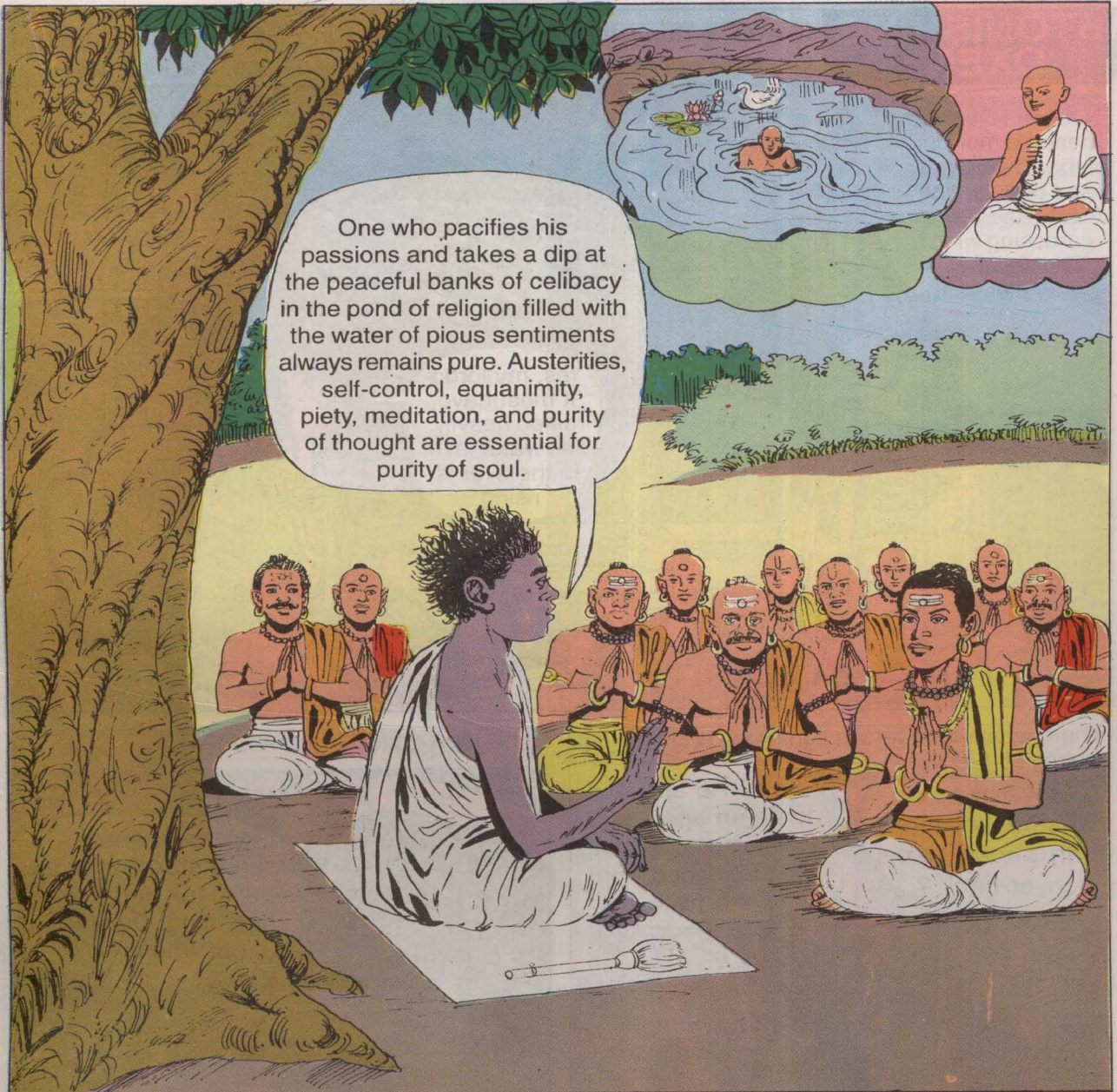
After this incident, Rudradev, the state priest, along with his yajna-priests, teachers, and students came to ascetic Harikesh Bal in the Tinduk forest and asked—

O great ascetic venerated by gods ! Please tell us what is the true yajna ? How do we perform that yajna ? What are the places of merits, donation to whom leads to well-being ? What is the definition of a true Brahmin ?

O Brahmins ! Consider your soul to be the sacrificial-pyre of the yajna. It is filled with the fire of austerities. The offerings are pious thoughts and deeds. A person endowed with pious conduct and discipline is called a true Brahmin.



[#] In ancient times the people of this clan cooked and ate dog-meat.



Thus after giving the message of truth, good conduct and ahimsa, ascetic Harikesh Bal returned into the jungle. He left his earthly abode after years of spiritual practices by taking the ultimate vow.

THE END

THE MESSAGE :

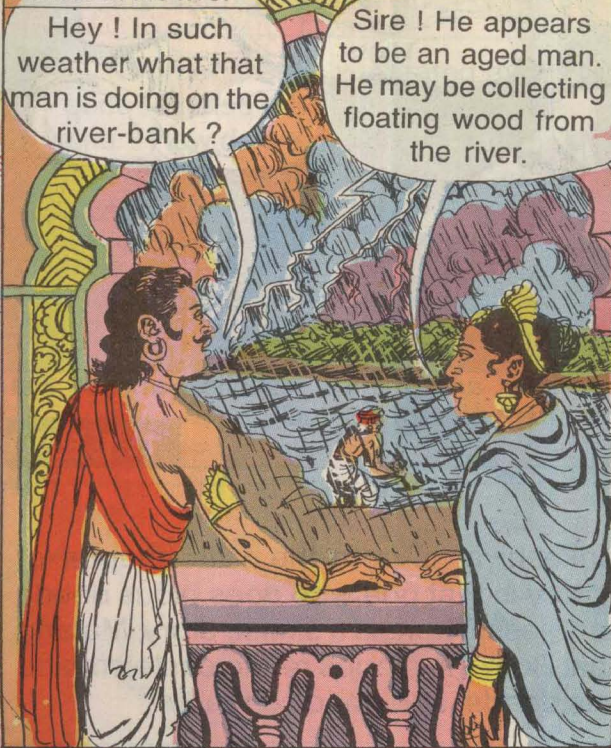
This story, popularly known as Harikeshiya, is from the 12th chapter of Uttaradhyayan Sutra. The message of this story is that one who does pious deeds excels in life. The pride of clan or family is worthless. There is a similar story, Matang Jatak, in the fourth part of the Buddhist Jatak. Both the stories refute casteism and establish the supremacy of austerities, pious deeds, and good conduct.

ASTONISHING OXEN

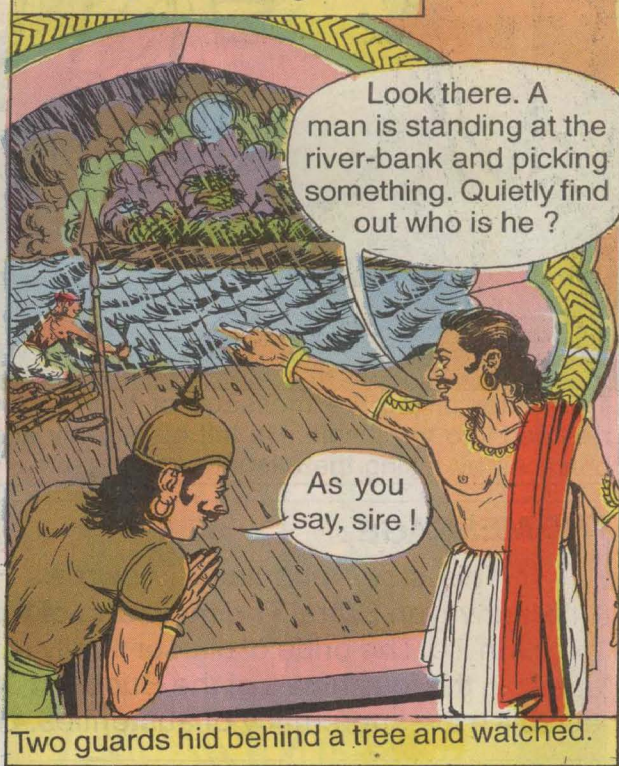
It was a rainy monsoon night and King Shrenik and queen Chelana were sitting in the balcony of their palace. The king said—



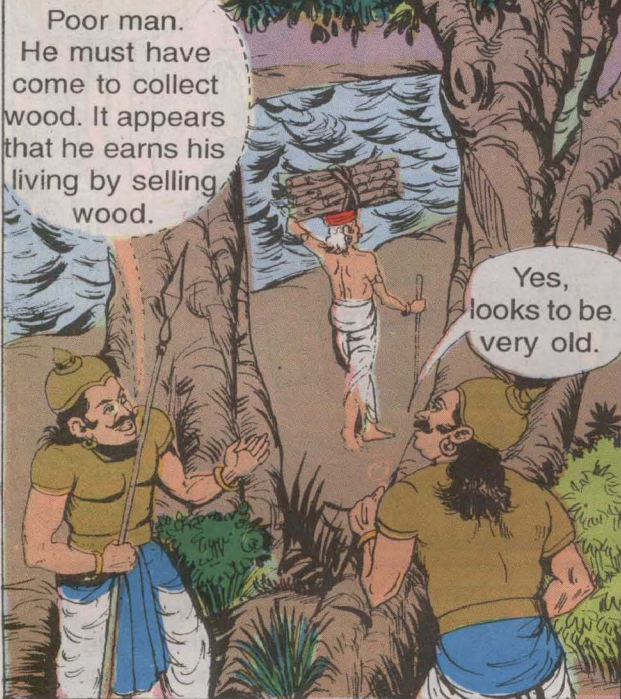
There was a thunderous lightening and the king looked at the river—



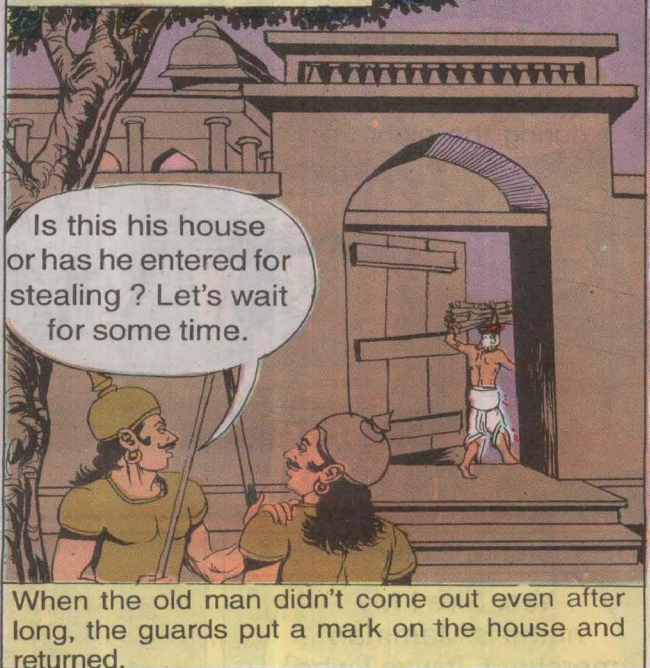
The king called his guards—



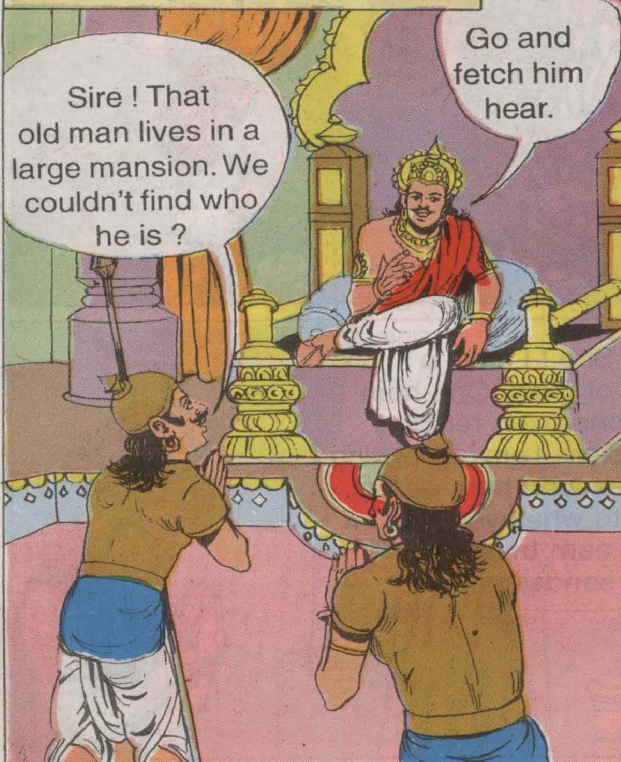
After collecting logs of wood the old man left.
The guards followed him.



The guards shadowed the old man. The old man arrived at a large mansion, opened the gate and went in.



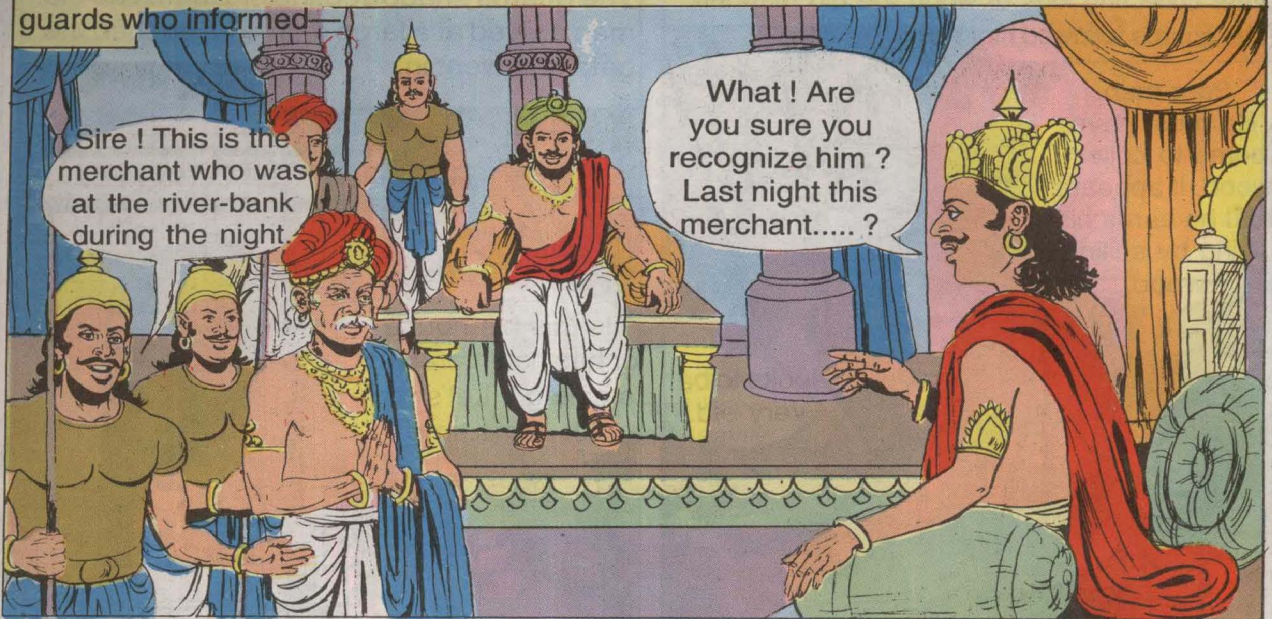
In the morning the guards informed the king—



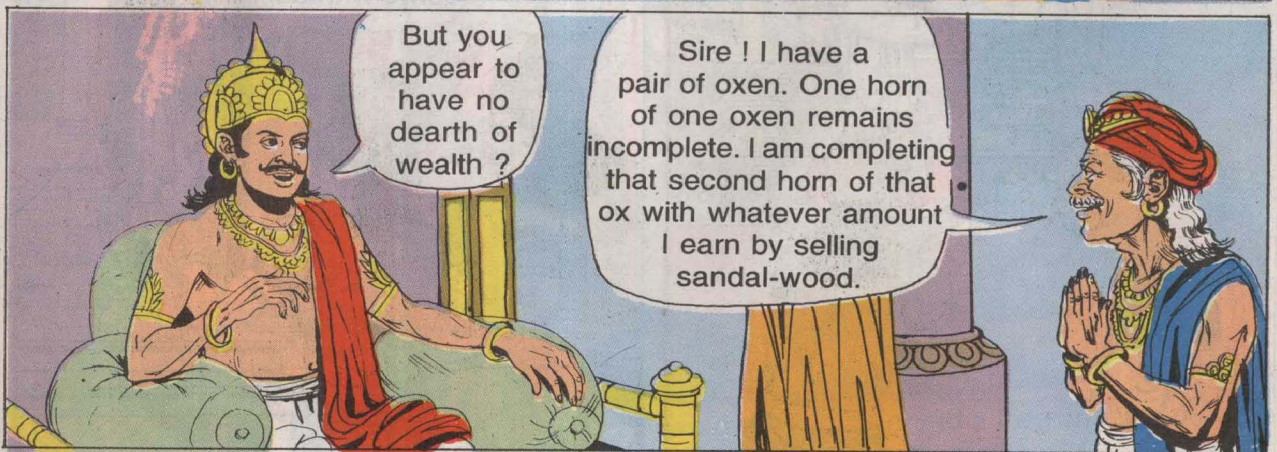
The guards came to the mansion and knocked. The same old man came out.

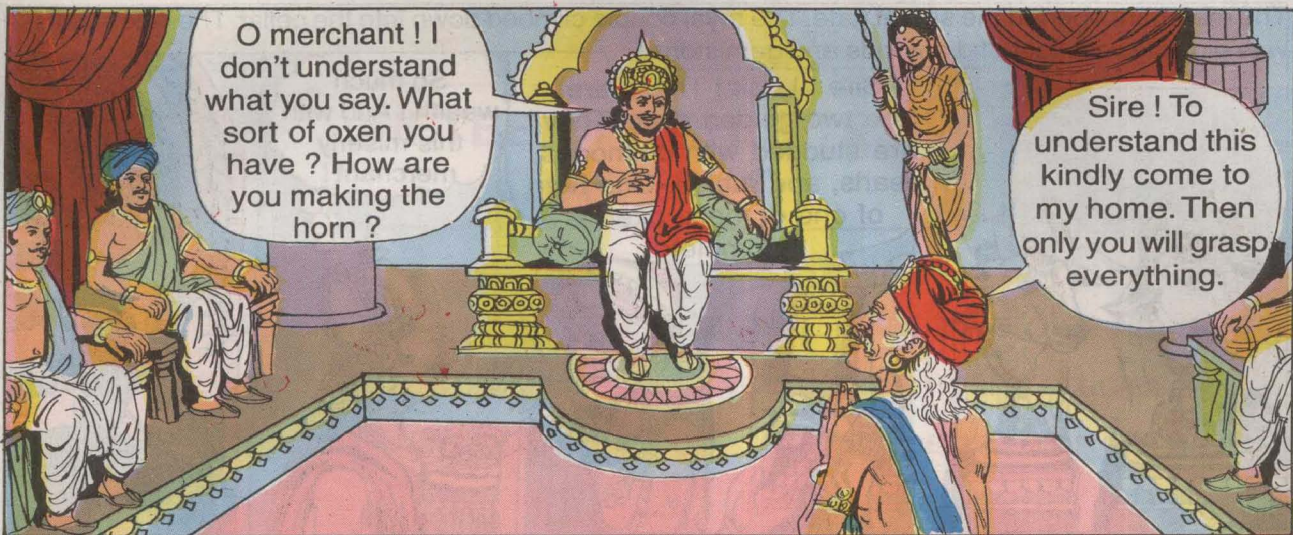


The merchant put on a rich dress and a diamond necklace. He arrived in the court with the guards who informed—

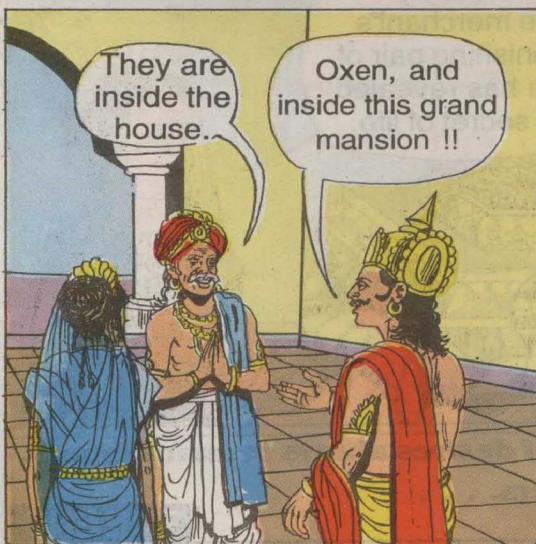


The merchant intervened—

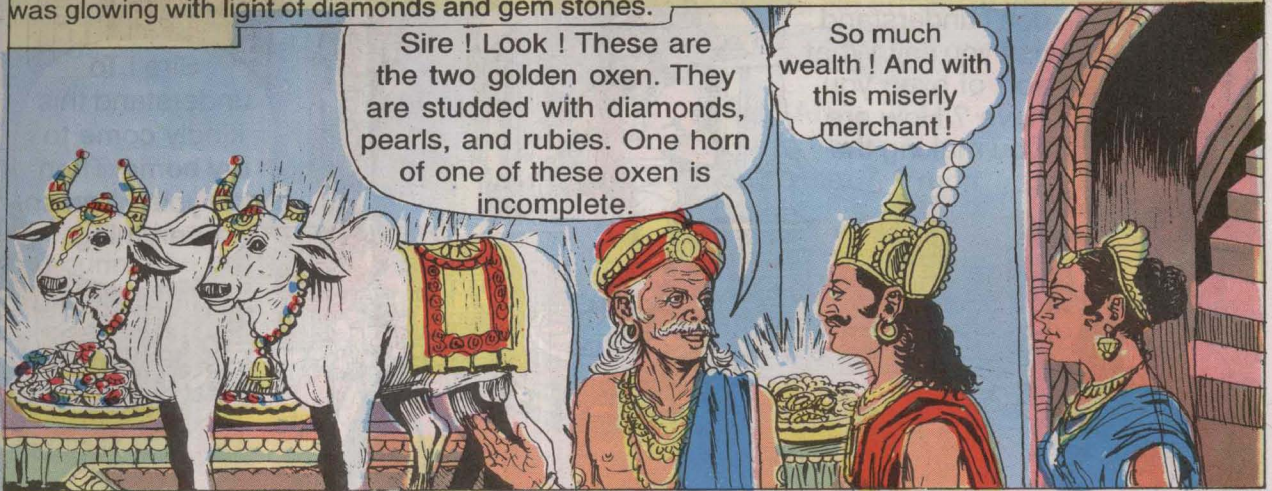




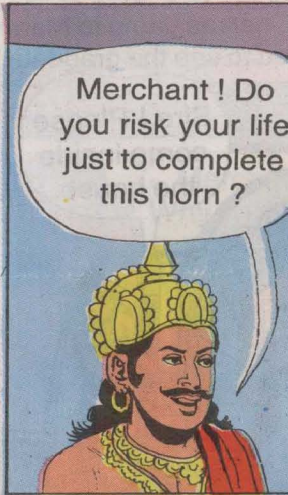
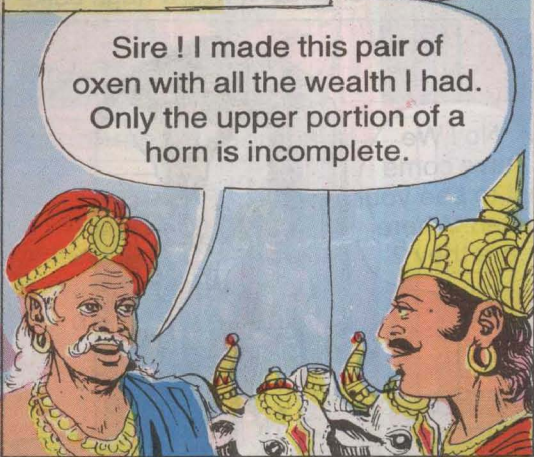
Next day King Shrenik and queen Chelana came to Mamman merchant's home. It was a huge building. The royal couple was astonished to see the grandeur.



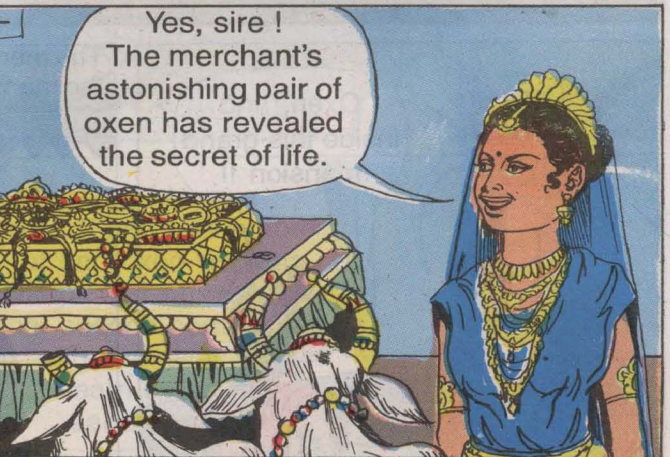
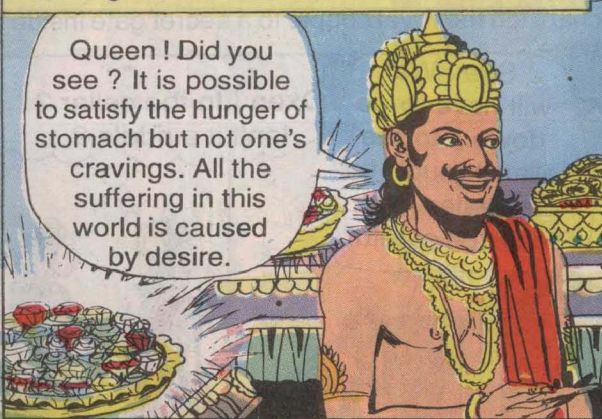
The merchant opened the secret gate. The royal couple climbed down into the cellar. The whole cellar was glowing with light of diamonds and gem stones.



The merchant informed—



The king looked at queen Chelana and said—



Wealth never brings satisfaction. The vessel of desires always remains empty. And it is because of cravings that man suffers. . . .

THE END

FIFTEEN PROHIBITED TRADES (1)

Anand *Shramanopasak* discarded fifteen professional activities while accepting the seventh vow of limiting the articles of use (*Upbhog-paribhog Pariman Vrat*). Those fifteen trades are as under-

(1) **Angar karm**—Such trades wherein fire, fuel or coal is mostly used is called *Angar karm*. To start a brick-kiln or cement factory fall in this category.

(2) **Van karm**—To get cut big trees. To obtain contract of clearing the forest.

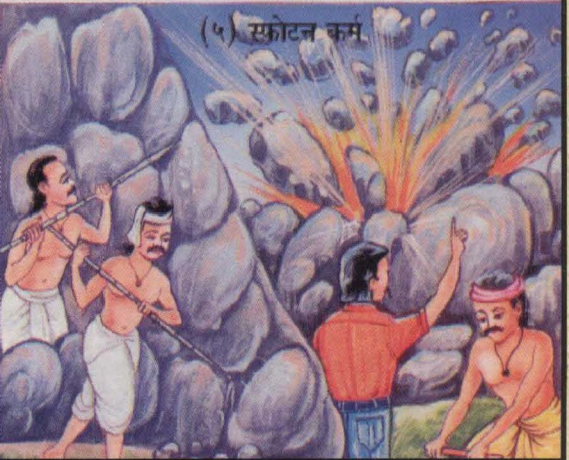
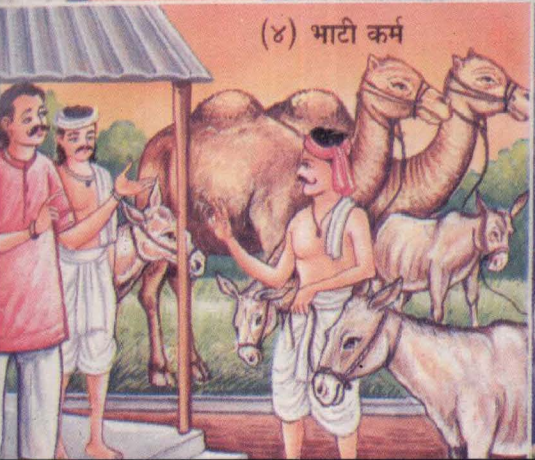
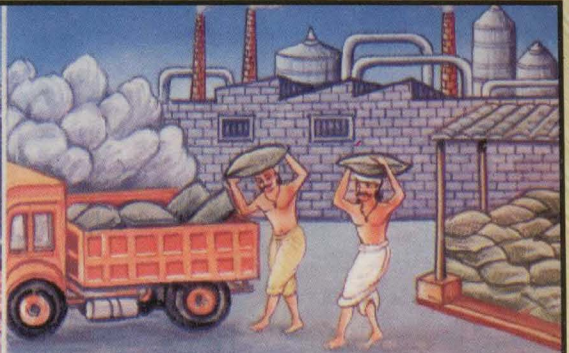
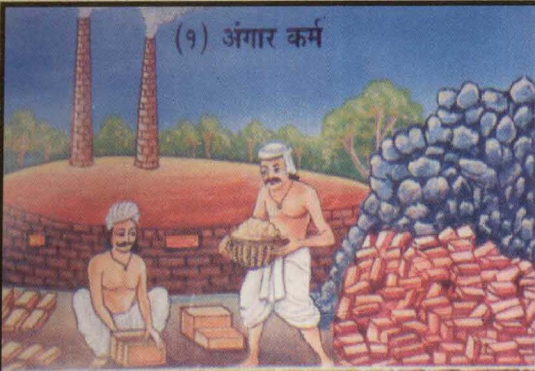
(3) **Shakat karm**—To manufacture and sell different types of carts and carriages for carrying passengers or goods.

(4) **Bharee karm**—To under trade of giving bullocks, camels, mules and the like on hire.

(5) **Sphotan karm**—Profession of mining, stone quarry.

—*Upasak-dasha, Ch. 1, Sutra 51*





FIFTEEN PROHIBITED TRADES (1)